EXCLUSIVE! First screenshots of John Romero's *Daikatana*!

PC GAMER

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CD-ROM Edition

ON THE CD

From the creators of *Duke Nukem 3D*...

Shadow Warrior

Plus, *Fallout*, *Betrayal in Antara*, & more!

Lara's Back!

EXCLUSIVE!

The toughest action hero in PC gaming returns in Eidos' jaw-dropping *Tomb Raider 2!* Our eight-page exclusive *(with plenty more pictures!)* starts on page 70...

THE ULTIMATE SIM?

Longbow 2: Your first look at Jane's amazing next generation of air combat.

STRATEGY CENTRAL

X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter, *Shadows Over Riva*, *Magic: The Gathering*, and many more!

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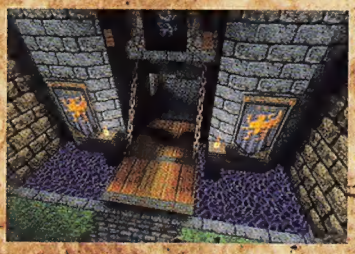
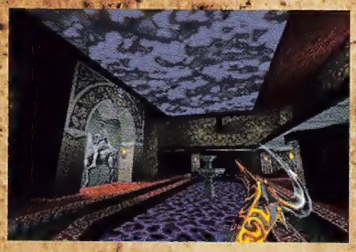
HE MEDIEVAL
CATHEDRAL OFTEN SERVED
AS A CENTER FOR LEARNING.
THIS IS GOING TO
BE A VERY PAINFUL LESSON.

Product Information Number 91

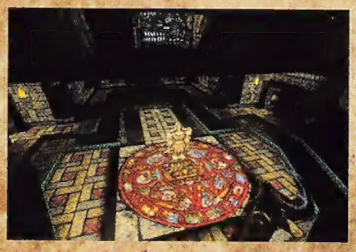
The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse lurk in the shadows before you. And they are not alone. Eidolon, the last-known Serpent Rider, lives. All of humanity has fallen to the archfiend and his Hell-spawned hordes. As the Necromancer, the Assassin, the Crusader, or the Paladin, you must put an end to this ravenous onslaught. But first, you must defeat the Dark Generals. Each of them awaits your arrival separately in one of four demon-infested worlds. You will know them when you see them. They will be Death, Pestilence, Famine and War. Will you be the teacher? Or the student?



Possess distinct spells, powers and weapons. With experience, gain levels, more hit points and certain abilities that apply to your specific character class, such as increased speed, firepower and jump distance.



Lose yourself in lightning storms, blowing leaves, earthquakes, spraying fountains and pouring rain.



Bludgeon your way through four demon-infested worlds — Medieval, Egyptian, Mesoamerican and Roman. Smash stained glass windows, collapse structural beams, and pulverize trees.

HEXEN II™

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

QUAKE ENGINE

Coming Soon on Windows® 95 CD-ROM

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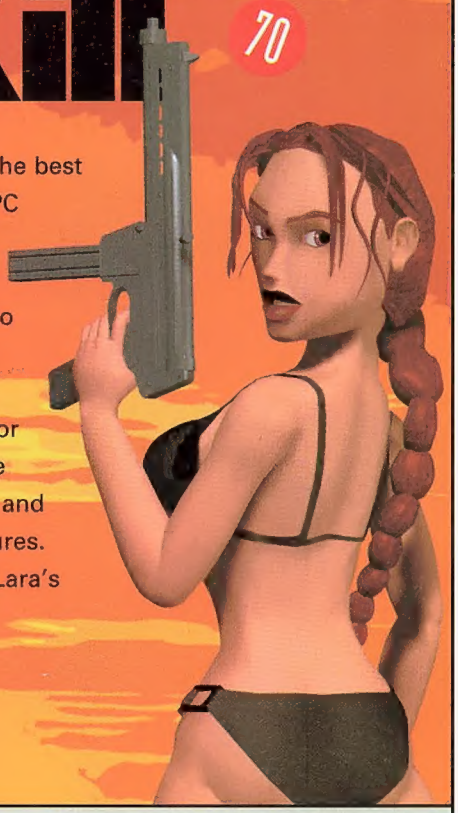
Cover Story

If Looks could Kill

70



The sequel to one of the best and most successful PC games ever is almost here, and *PC Gamer* is the only magazine to take you inside Core Design's secluded British headquarters for an in-depth look at the game's development, and tons of exclusive pictures. Come check it out — Lara's waiting for you...

Feature

Give 'Em Hellfires

Jane's Combat Simulations is about to up the ante on the standard of PC flight simulation with a new generation of chopper combat that will blow you away. And, of course, we have the exclusive first-ever inside look, and an in-depth interview with the game's developers.

84

Hardware

135 The Hard Stuff

Trackball game controllers! Cordless mice! 64-bit surround sound! DVD-ROM drives! Cheap 3D accelerators! All this and much, much more in the latest installmant of *PC Gamer*'s unrivalled gaming hardware coverage.

Scoops

38 Daikatana

The new game from John Romero, the co-creator of *Doom* and *Quake*, is probably the most anticipated new 3D title of 1997, and guess what? We've got the first ever screenshots!

44 Star Trek: Secret of Vulcan Fury

Interplay returns to familiar territory with a new graphic adventure set in the Star Trek universe, now more cinematic than ever before.

48 Defiance

Here's yet another new action game for 3D blasting fans to get their teeth into, and it promises a few twists on the established genre.

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Getting the most out of our demo disc is easy with these useful pages!

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We've got the skinny on the whole F-22 controversy, plus the latest developments in the online gaming world and a whole slew of upcoming projects in Under Construction.

164 **Extended Play** — T. Liam McDonald
TalonSoft expands its Battleground series, and a trio of upgrades to existing favorites catches Tom's eye.

168 **The Learning Game** — Heidi E. H. Aycock
It may be summertime, but the traditional yearly slump hasn't stopped the flow of quality educational software, as Heidi's latest batch demonstrates.

170 **Multi-Play** — Jason Bates
Will the "massively multi-player" games and "persistent worlds" we hear so much about ever become a reality? Jason is optimistic...

173 **Alternate Lives** — Michael Wolf
What goes through the mind of a top roleplaying game developer? Well, let's ask one!

174 **The Desktop General** — William R. Trotter
Are wargames stagnating by constantly recreating the same old battles? Trotter has some ideas for some interesting, lesser-known, engagements that would make thrilling games.

178 **Sim Column** — Dan Bennett
It's a double serving this month as Dan dissects the issues behind the recent F-22 Raptor controversy.

182 **Strategy Central**
Our own personal playing guides for *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*, the first part of a *Last Express* solution, and beginner's guides to *Magic: The Gathering* and *Shadows Over Riva* round out this month's top tips.

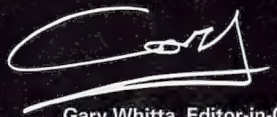
206 **Letters**
Our latest batch of reader mail makes some good points, some bad points, and some that are somewhere in-between. Aaah, life in all its infinite bounty.

216 **Next Issue**
Check this out to see what our bonanza post-E3 issue has in store for you.

185 **Subscription/Customer Service Information**
Why are you reading this at a magazine rack? There's a better way: Subscribe!

Two be or not two be?

Is "sequelitis" becoming a problem for the PC gaming industry? Our two big feature previews this month are about potentially awesome games, but they both come slapped with that tell-tale "2" on the end. Aside from *Tomb Raider 2* and *Longbow 2*, the year ahead will also bring us *Monkey Island 3, Wing Commander V, Command & Conquer 2, Myst II, Hexen II, Quake II, Duke Nukem Forever, SimCity 3000, X-COM 3, Ultima IX, King's Quest VIII, Quest For Glory V, Might & Magic VI, Falcon 4, TFX 3, MechWarrior 3, Zork Grand Inquisitor, Panzer General 2, Close Combat 2, Jedi Knight: Dark Forces 2, Hardball 6, Armored Fist 2, Populous 3, Wizardry VIII, Lands of Lore II*... and that's only the beginning. Is this symptomatic of a lack of originality in the game industry, or are game companies simply giving us what we want? I, for one, won't be complaining about the arrival of some of the games on the above list, but every game series runs the risk of eventually outstaying its welcome — Richard Garriott recently told me that *Ultima IX* will probably be the last game in that series, and that may well be a wise move. This year's Electronic Entertainment Expo should demonstrate whether or not the "sequelitis" trend, which has never been stronger than it is right now, is affecting the number of good, original games coming down the pipe — look out for our mammoth Ultimate Game Preview special next month and decide for yourself...



Gary Whitta, Editor-in-Chief

PC Gamer (ISSN-1080-4471) is published monthly by Imagine Publishing, Inc., 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Periodicals Class postage paid at Brisbane, CA, and additional mailing offices. Newsstand distribution is handled by the Curtis Circulation Company. Subscriptions: One year (12 issues) US: $39.90. Canada: $53.90. Foreign: $63.90. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST #128220688). Outside US and Canada: Add $2.00 per issue. For customer service, write PC Gamer, Attn: Customer Service, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005, call (415) 468-2500. **Postmaster** please send change of address to *PC Gamer*, P.O. Box 51199, Boulder, CO 80322-1199. Corporate, advertising sales, circulation, editorial and production offices: 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Phone: (415) 468-4684. Fax: (415) 468-4686. Editorial product information should be addressed to Editor, *PC Gamer*, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Overnight delivery parcels should be addressed to *PC Gamer*, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned or acknowledged. Imagine Publishing, Inc., also publishes *Game Players, Next Generation, Boot, MacAddict, The Net*, and *PlayStation Magazine*.

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IPM# 0781118. **Produced in U.S.A.**

Standard Mail enclosed in the following editions: B, B1, B2, B3, C, C1, D.

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage Paid
South Florida Facility
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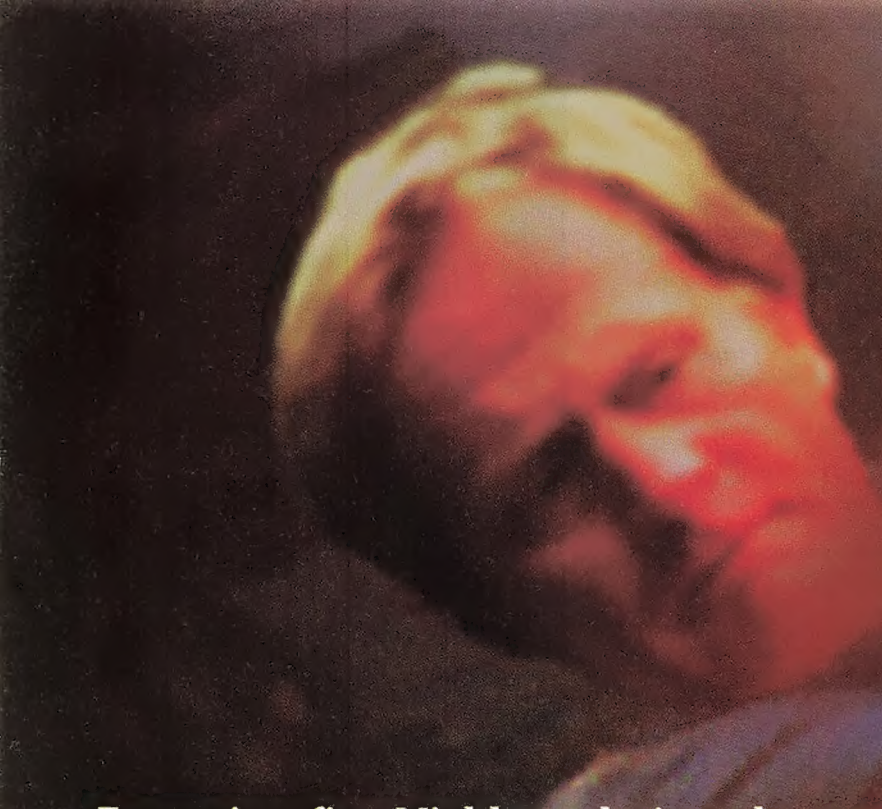


"It's an absolute model of perfection."
Computer Gaming World

CG RATED

"Jack Nicklaus 4 is arguably the best golf sim ever."
Boot

boot KICK ASS! PRODUCT

"...promises to be among the greatest achievements yet on the electronic links."
PC Games

"A truly revolutionary product. Links finally has some stiff competition."
Computer and Net Player

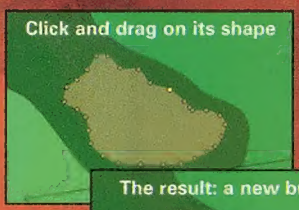
"...impressive..."
GOLFWEEK

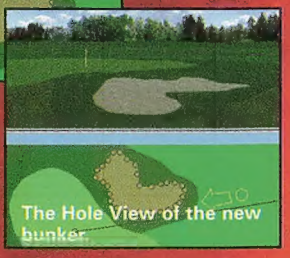
Featuring five Nicklaus designed courses: *Colleton River Plantation, Country Club of the South, Muirfield Village, Cabo del Sol,* and *Winding Springs.*

The Course Designer

Input the basic details of a course from a real scorecard–the "Wizard" automatically routes each hole.

Choose from a variety of templates, or create your own shapes. Changing terrain is as easy as click-and-drag.





Choose from over 100 different types of trees, bushes, rocks, and other objects!

"Is it live or is it...?" Our Course Designer is so true-to-life, it's hard to tell the difference!

This image is of the 3rd Green at Country Club of the South. The left half of the image is from the Course Designer; the right half of the image is an actual photo.

From Tee to Green

The Tee Shot

Pop-up displays are optional– leave them off for the purest golfing experience.

The fastest screen redraw times on the PC allow the camera to automatically switch to the landing in full-screen, from varying viewpoints!

The Approach Shot

New "Intensity Control™" reproduces the dynamics that shape the shot. "Club up and swing easy" for control or a low trajectory; "swing hard" when you want spin and distance.

Every shot flies, bounces, and rolls true to the game, with the best ball physics model in existence. Courses are accurate to within 6 inches!

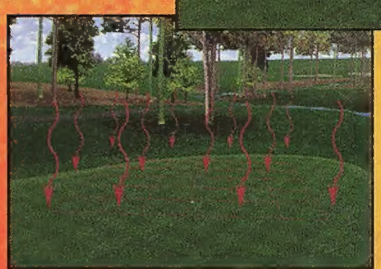
Multiplayer play is fully supported, including recorded rounds, shared keyboard, serial, modem, LAN and Internet play.

Weather can change in the middle of the round, and natural wind variations and every possible turf condition add to the challenge!

Around The Green

Our new approach makes putting more realistic. Mow lines on the green help you read the contour.

Separate chipping and putting meters maximize control around the green.

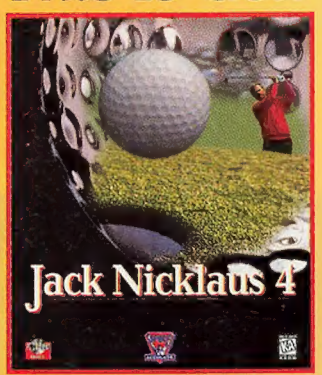


For enhanced gameplay, this optional grid floats down and drapes itself over the green, clearly showing all high and low spots.

Get the Demo!
www.accolade.com

Call 1–800–245–7744 to order direct

This Is Golf



PC CD-ROM WINDOWS 95

MODEM SERIAL SOLO PLUS LAN INTERNET™

ACCOLADE

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More levels than a Tokyo skyscraper

Tanks, bulldozers, boats, forklifts: Drive to kill

Hand to face combat mode: Kick butt karate-style

WHO WANTS SOME WANG?

Shadow Warrior is here. Lo Wang.

#1 Assassin. #1 Yakuza abuser.

#1 Freak fragger. #1 Mutant mutilator.

#1 reason to be scared of the dark.

#1 Son-of-a-Bitch. So say Sayonara to all the Ninja wannabes that have gone before and put on your combat sandals...

Lo Wang is coming to the Land of the Rising Sun to turn out the lights. Shadow Warrior.

The Zen is going to hit the fan.

"There's no doubt that Shadow Warrior cremates the competition."
GameSlice Weekly

Fog, multi-colored lighting, transparent water...total immersionn.

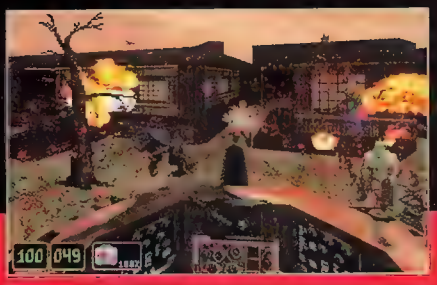
More hi-jinks, Lo-Wang speak, and total interaction than Duke Nukem 3D

8-Player Wangbang (deathmatch), Co-Op and Team Play modes with all-new Handicapping option.

Throwing stars, Uzis, 4-Barrel shotguns and more

Swim, climb, drive, go anywhere, do anything!

Rotating 3D gun turrets to mow down enemies



FRESH FROM THE CREATORS OF DUKE NUKEM 3D™

Lo Wang™ is

Shadow Warrior™

All-new Build Editor for designing and destroying your own environments

GET YOURSELF A SLICE OF THE ACTION IN STORES...NOW!

or download the shareware at
www.shadowwarrior.com

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developed by
3D REALMS
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GT Interactive Software
www.gtinteractive.com

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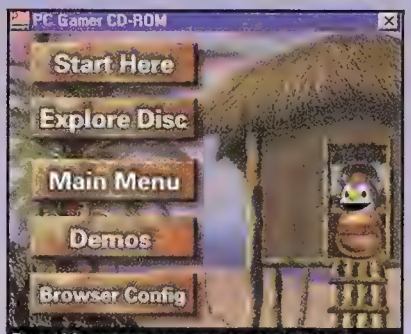
Product Information Number 154

A Monkey's Dream

As we wind down toward the end of summer, we can't help but look forward to the Gaming Goodness in store for us when software companies start releasing their holiday games. Coconut Monkey is so excited about it, he set his latest game in a winter wonderland. It's called *Frozen Ape*, and you'll find it on this month's CD. It's extraordinarily...strange.

We've also got a ton of great demos you can check out. 3D Realms has finally released the *Shadow Warrior* shareware, which will have the ninja in you hungering for blood — and there's plenty of it! Also check out BMG's excellent motorcycle racing game, *Moto Racer GP*. It looks and feels great! And it's a good month for roleplaying games, with Interplay's *Fallout* and Sierra's *Betrayal in Antara* waiting for you to explore them. You can't help but win with this kind of lineup!



From this screen, you can go straight to the demos, the main menu, or click the Start Here button to view the intro.

Entering Paradise

Your exploration begins with a panoramic view of Coconut Monkey's Island. You can move the mouse around the screen to scroll left or right. When your mouse scrolls over an area that contains information, it will turn into an arrow. Just click on the highlighted site to enter.

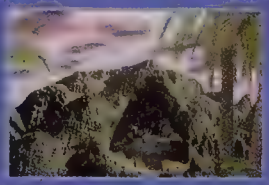
There are also control buttons on the bottom of the screen that will take you directly to any one of the many usable sites. The control buttons can be clicked on to enter and exit each site.

Quick Start for The CD

1. Insert the CD.
2. From the Windows RUN option (found under the File Menu in Windows 3.1 or Start Menu under Windows 95) type X:START31.EXE or X:START95.EXE, depending on your version of Windows (where X is the letter of your CD-ROM drive).
3. This will run *The CD*.

FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND

REVIEWS INDEX

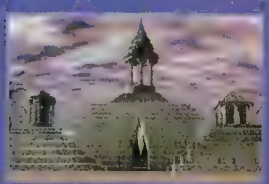


The Reviews Index contains info on every review we've ever run, including the Highs, Lows, and Bottom Line. The arrows will scroll through the index, and there's a search button to help you find any review by title.

PATCHES

The Patches & Updates section shows a description and location for each of the patches on *The CD*, as well as all of the add-on levels we've included for *Quake*, *WarCraft II*, *Duke Nukem 3D*, and *Doom II*.

TECH SUPPORT



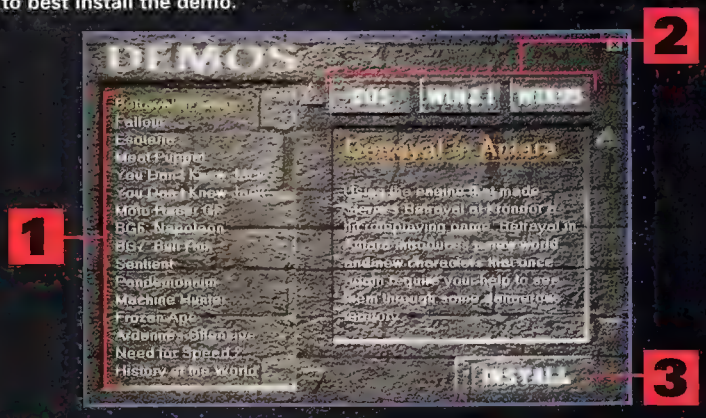
Our Technical Support database includes contact information for many game companies. The arrows will let you scroll through the selections, plus there's a search button so you can find any company by name.

INTERNET

At the Internet Hut, you can install any of the online services on *The CD*. You can also select your web browser to connect to the Internet — very handy for getting online info if you have problems with a demo.

PLAYING THE DEMOS

This is where you go to install the many demos on *The CD*. When you first enter this screen, a list of all the demos will appear in the left column. 1 Click on the DOS, WIN 3.1, and WIN 95 buttons. 2 This will break the demos down into their respective categories. The INSTALL button 3 will allow you to install a demo and, if applicable, connect to that company's web site (you'll have to first select your browser from the Internet Hut). Occassionally, some of these demos won't install from our front end. In these cases, a message will appear instructing you on how to best install the demo.



System Requirements

486/33; 4MB RAM; Mouse

NOTE: These requirements are for loading our front-end program only. Each game demo will have its own additional requirements, so be sure to read them carefully.

Attention Win95 Users

The *PC Gamer* front end should work fine in Windows. To install and run DOS games, you will need to reboot into a DOS session.

Free Demos!

Newsstand buyers now have the choice of purchasing either the CD-ROM Edition of *PC Gamer* for $7.99, or *PC Gamer* without a CD-ROM for $3.99. If you purchase the edition without a disc, you can still get free game demos because all *PC Gamer* readers have the opportunity to get demos and other goodies in a couple of different ways:

1. You can download demos and check out *PC Gamer*'s new look at our World Wide Web site at *www.pcgamer.com* on the Internet. Our Web site also features a special Strategy Plus section, links to other hot Web pages, and gaming news.

2. You can call our Customer Service department at (415) 468-2500 (between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. PST) to have *The CD* mailed to you for only $7.95 shipping and handling.

Disc Editors' Note

Technical support for the PC Gamer CD can be found online at *http://support.imagine-inc.com*. You will also find a CD FAQ (Frequently-Asked-Questions list) on our web site at *www.pcgamer.com*. If you have any suggestions or comments for the CD, write us at: PC Gamer CD Editors, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005.

CONTENTS / MANUAL INSTALLATION COMMANDS

Installation Shortcuts

In the event our front end doesn't load or run properly on your machine, you can still install each demo, bypassing our front end altogether.

To manually install a demo, take a look at the Command Box located to the right. This box contains a list of demos along with their directories and installation commands.

To get up and running using the Command Box, first switch to your CD-ROM drive and change to the appropriate directory by typing CD\DIRECTORY, where DIRECTORY is the one listed in the Command Table next to the game you're trying to install. Once in the right directory, type the Install Command, then press Enter.

For example, to install the *Fallout* demo: At the DOS Prompt, type "CD\X" where X is the name of your CD drive. Then type "CD\FALLDEMO". Then type SETUP.EXE and press Enter. The demo of *Fallout* will then be installed on your computer. If you're running Windows 95 or Windows 3.1, you can instead use the File Manager or Explorer to find the appropriate directory on *The CD*, and then double-click on the installation command for a Windows-based demo.

For help with our DOS demos, we've added a menu system that will install them for you. Simply switch to your CD-ROM drive and type "MENU". It's a simple as that.

Demo	Directory	Install Command	Page	OS
Shadow Warrior	\SWDEMO \SWDOS	SETUP.EXE (WIN95) INSTALL.EXE (DOS)	10	WIN95/DOS
Moto Racer GP	\MOTORACE	SETUP.EXE	10	WIN95
Betrayal in Antara	\BATDEMO	BIADEMO.EXE	13	WIN95
Esoteria	\ESTDEMO	SETUP.EXE	13	WIN95
Fallout	\FALLDEMO	SETUP.EXE	14	WIN95
Absolute Pinball	\PINBALL	INSTALL.BAT	16	DOS
Bust a Move 2	\BAM2DEMO \BAM2DOS	SETUP.EXE INSTALL.BAT (DOS)	16	WIN95/DOS
BG: Napoleon In Russia	\NIR_DEMO	SETUP.EXE	19	WIN 3.1
BG: Bull Run	\BGBRDEMO	SETUP.EXE	19	WIN 3.1
Ardennes Offensive	\TAODEMO	TAODEMO.EXE	21	WIN95
History of the World	\HOTWDEMO	SETUP.EXE	23	WIN 3.1
Need for Speed 2	\NFSDEMO	SETUP.EXE	27	WIN95
Sentient	\ \	SETUP.EXE (WIN95) INSTALL.BAT (DOS)	27	WIN95/DOS
Machine Hunter	\MHDEMO	SETUP.EXE	28	WIN95
Z.A.R.	\ZARDEMO \ZARDOS	SETUP.EXE (WIN31) See Note (DOS)	28	DOS
You Don't Know Jack	\YDKJDEMO	SETUP.EXE (5QDEMO.EXE for Sports Edition)	31	WIN 3.1
Pandemonium	\PANDEMON	SETUP.EXE	31	WIN95
Mindspring	\MSPRING	SETUP.EXE	32	WIN 3.1
Earthlink: 14-day trial 3-day trial	\EARTHL\14DAY\TA \EARTHL\3DAY\TA	SETUP.EXE SETUP.EXE	32 32	WIN 95
America Online	\AOL	SETUP.EXE	32	WIN 3.1
Patches	\PATCHES			
Quake BSPs	\QUAKE			
Duke Nukem 3D MAPs	\DUKE3D			
C&C: Red Alert MPRs	\C&C			

Shadow Warrior

Company: GT Interactive
Tech Support: (716) 871-6646
Release Date: September 1997
Category: Action
Required: Pentium, 8MB RAM, 42MB hard-drive space, VGA
Install: \SWDEMO\SETUP.EXE (for Win95)
\SWDOS\INSTALL.EXE (for DOS)

Lo Wang, champion ninja, once worked for Zilla Enterprises as a protector, assassin, and cleaner. But when he discovered that Master Zilla was working on a project to bring evil creatures over from the "dark side," he chose to quit. Now Master Zilla is testing his new creatures for the first time. Their objective: kill Lo Wang.

You, of course, take Wang's role as you destroy all of Zilla's evil servants. As a ninja, you have many special abilities you can use — your trusty ninja sword, the shuriken (throwing stars) between your fingers, and some more conventional weapons, like Uzi machine guns, riot guns, and rocket launchers. As you explore each level, you will find ammunition for your weapons, as well as a variety of items and power-ups, laying around. Some are within easy reach — many aren't.

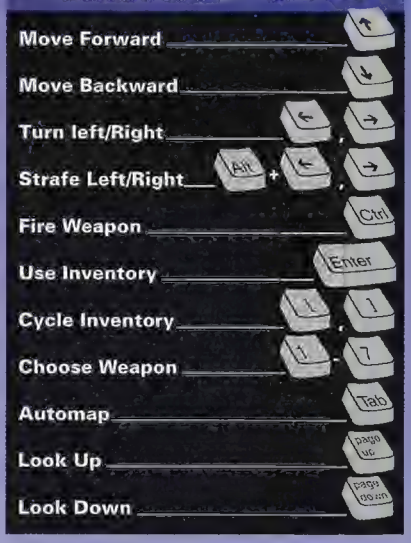
Your sword is certainly effective, but you have to get dangerously close to use it.

The shareware version of *Shadow Warrior* contains the first episode of intense action. Based on the Build engine created for *Duke Nukem 3D*, you'll recognize many of the features of the game. You'll blow up weak-looking walls to find secret passages; turn on and off light switches; and swim under water.

The controls are also similar to *Duke Nukem 3D*; the differences lie in the weapons. Many of them have more than one mode of firing. For example, pressing 3 will equip the riot gun (if you have it) in single-shot mode. Pressing 3 again will change the mode to auto-fire — pressing the fire key will fire off several rounds of ammunition. Many of the other weapons have similar modes — experiment to find out what they are.

For those not familiar with the Build engine, take a look at the control keys to see what you need to know. You can also play with the mouse or joystick, and configure your keyboard control from the Setup menu, where you also configure your sound card and screen resolutions.

CONTROL KEYS



Moto Racer GP

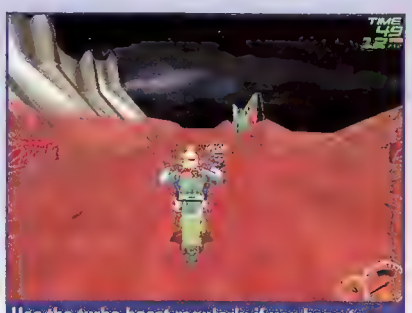
Win95

Company: BMG Interactive
Tech Support: www.mracer.com
Release Date: November 1997
Category: Arcade
Required: Windows 95, Pentium, 16MB RAM, 35MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \MOTORACE\SETUP.EXE

Developed by Delphine Entertainment, *Moto Racer GP* will knock your socks off. Few racing games hook the *PC Gamer* staff the way this one has. Running on a 200Mhz testing system, with a 3Dfx 3D accelerator, the game was good enough to capture everyone's attention. And that was the *beta* version. Now you can see for yourself what the excitement was about.

We strongly recommend using a joystick to control your bike. When you set the game up to use the joystick under the Options menu (the default is keyboard), you can choose to configure the controls to suit your own tastes. You can also opt to play in several different resolutions and different levels of detail, and if you have a D3D-compatible 3D accelerator, you can opt to use the D3D or not.

The idea of the game, of course, is to finish the race in first place, but you're not going to win by keeping the throttle wide open at all times; this game takes some finesse. You have a turbo button that will give you momentary bursts of speed, as well as a brake you'll want to make use of to avoid smearing yourself across that pretty landscape. The demo contains two tracks — the Speed Bay, and a Dirt Arena. Speed Bay is a straight road race — hug the corners and avoid the other cyclists. Use the straight-aways for speed, but watch those turns — if you're going too fast, you'll lose precious time as you recover from a crash into a wall. The Dirt Arena is more about jumping and position. You'll want to gain air by pressing the turbo button before you launch off the jump. If you find yourself in the air, you can also press the turbo key to perform a mid-air stunt, earning the applause and appreciation of the audience.


Use the turbo boost regularly if you hope to stay ahead of the pack.

If you hit the walls going too fast, you'll go sailing through the air.

On both tracks, you can only choose one bike that's balanced between all the values — overall speed, acceleration, braking, and grip. The full version contains several more tracks, and choosing which bikes to race on which track is just as important as knowing how to race the tracks themselves.

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Product Information Number 185

Betrayal in Antara

Win95

Company: Sierra
Tech Support: (206) 644-4343
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Roleplaying
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 38MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \BATDEMO\BIADEMO.EXE

The beautiful graphics of *Betrayal in Antara* improve on the old *Betrayal at Krondor* game engine.

When young Aren Cordelaine discovers he has magical abilities while saving William Escobar from sure death, he sets out on a journey with his new companion to the faraway city of Panzio to study with the mages there. Along the way, he'll encounter friends, enemies, and terrifying monsters. And that's only the beginning of the story!

Sierra's new roleplaying game, based on the popular *Betrayal at Krondor* system, contains a huge world to explore, hundreds of weapons and items to find and use, and a story line that will suck you in and refuse to let go. The demo contains a small area of the full world, and you can explore, fight, and learn within it.

After you start the demo, try hitting F1 to access the online help system to answer any questions you might have. You can also right-click on virtually any button to view its function. Use the arrow keys to move forward, backward, and to the side — or you can use the navigation compass at the top right of the screen. Left-click on the portraits of your party members to access their inventories, and right-click on them to access their skill screens. Equip your characters by dragging the item you want to equip to the mannequin, and you'll see the character hold or wear the item. If you want to use an item, just double-click it.

As in *Betrayal at Krondor*, combat is turn-based from a third-person perspective. You can click on the bottom-left button to switch between swing styles, with different hit values. Left-click on an enemy to attack him if he's in range. If one of the characters has a bow or can cast a spell, click on the appropriate button, choose your ammo or the spell, then choose a target.

Esoteria

Win95

Company: Mobeus Designs
Tech Support: *mdr@mobeus.com*
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: Windows 95; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 23MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \ESTDEMO\SETUP.EXE

CONTROL KEYS

Forward	E	Open doors, push buttons, etc.	G
Backwards	D	Cycle Weapons	B T
Slide Right	S	Equip the ARC Blade	1
Slide Left	F	Equip the ARC	2
Jump	Spacebar	Equip Missiles	6
Crouch	A	Equip Homing Missiles	7
Item Selection Forward	Q	Toggle Laser Targeting Dot on/off	C
Item Selection Backwards	Z	Run mode	Caps Lock
Use the Currently Selected Item	R	Go to the Main Interface Screen	ESC

Far in the future, there is a division between two groups of people — the Loyalists and the Regime. The Regime has been using a cybernetically engineered human to do its dirty work, and the assassin has been doing its job well. But when the Loyalists capture the highly advanced human weapon, they manage to place conscience and morals in him. Now the assassin, code-named Raven, fights for the Loyalists against the despotic and tyrannical Cohen Soldzen, leader of the Regime.

There are plenty of explosions in the demo of *Esoteria*.

The story has little to do with the gameplay, though. A 3D shooter from a third-person perspective, *Esoteria* contains fully 3D objects, a multitude of weapons, and a variety of enemies to kill. Rather than work in levels, you have access to virtually the whole world all at the same time, creating a completely non-linear scenario. In the demo, you have one such scenario to explore. Your mission is to kill a dangerous guardian robot at the main entrance to Regime headquarters. To do it, you'll want to get plenty of weapons and power-ups, and those are scattered all around. Hit the Escape key and click on Data Files to pull up a map of the complex. The red markers are where certain powerful objects are located, and the numbers inside them are the recommended order of retrieval. You can do whatever you like; however, it may be harder than it looks.

Raven is equipped with an ARC, an "actuated razor crescent," which will pick off enemies at a long distance as well as work as a sniper weapon when in sniper mode. Raven can also pick up missiles and other deadly weapons. Look at the control keys listed here to get an idea of how to play. It's a bit different from most action games, so it might take you a while to get used to the controls. Use the keyboard in conjunction with the mouse, and after a few minutes you'll get the hang of it.

Fallout

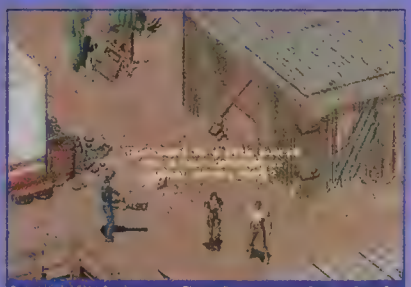
Win95

Company: Interplay
Tech Support: (714) 553-6678
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Roleplaying
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 24MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \FALLDEMO\SETUP.EXE

In an alternate version of the 1950s, a nuclear holocaust destroys life as we know it on the surface of Earth. Many years into the future, it's time for the ones who have hidden underground to come out, and it's up to a single adventurer to bring back news of the world outside. You play that adventurer in Interplay's new science fiction roleplaying game.

The demo introduces the art of character modification, the interface, and combat. Although you can play with the characters that come with the demo and assign them new stats, you cannot save them — the demo will start with a precreated character under your command. You control your character with the mouse — when the icon is a red hexagon, clicking on an empty hex will make your character walk to that spot. Right-click the mouse to turn the movement icon into the action icon, which will let you pick up objects, speak to people, and examine your surroundings. By default, what the action icon does depends on where you click it — if you click on a person, it assumes you want to talk to them so conversation is initiated. If you click on an object, it gives a description. You can perform other actions by holding the left mouse button down when the cursor is over an object, and choosing an action from the list that pops up.

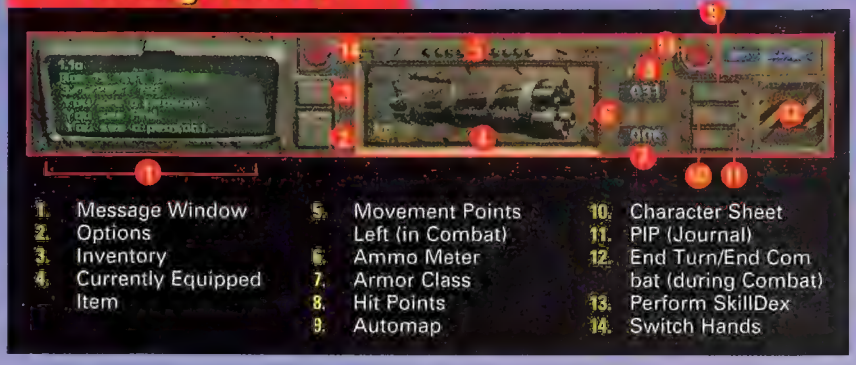
The diagrams here describe some of the interface. Combat is turned-based, but you need to be sure you're armed before combat begins. To arm yourself, click on the inventory button and put the gun in one of your slots. You'll automatically hold it in your hand. To fire, right-click on the picture of the gun at the bottom of the screen until you have your chosen style of fire (you can choose from single fire, single fire to a specific vital area of the enemy's body, and burst fire). Then left-click the picture; the icon will turn into a red cross-hair and the creatures you can fire at will be highlighted in red. Simply select your target and left-click on it. If you hold the cursor over your target, you'll see a number indicating the percentage chance you have of hitting the target.



In post-nuclear-war America, even the animals have the right to survive. But sometimes, you have to make exceptions.

The demo takes place in Scrapheap, a town ruled by two rival gangs. Your job is to kill off all the members of both gangs in order to bring peace to the town. If you do it right, you might just get the gang members to do most of the work for you.

Taking Control



1. Message Window
2. Options
3. Inventory
4. Currently Equipped Item
5. Movement Points Left (in Combat)
6. Ammo Meter
7. Armor Class
8. Hit Points
9. Automap
10. Character Sheet
11. PIP (Journal)
12. End Turn/End Combat (during Combat)
13. Perform SkillDex
14. Switch Hands

Meat Puppet

Win95

Company: Playmates Interactive Entertainment
Tech Support: (714) 562-1720
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 24MB hard-drive space;
Install: \MEATDEMO\SETUP.EXE

There's little to no plot for *Meat Puppet* — it's all about "kill or be killed." But, truth be told, the story behind *this* bloodfest is rather twisted. You play Lotos Abstraction, an alluring woman living in a ravaged 21st century. After answering an ad for a party, her mind was stripped of memory, and gel sacs were placed underneath her skin. The entity who performed these acts on her, known only as the Martinet, or Puppet Master, told her that she must infiltrate six embassies and assassinate the leaders in each one. If she doesn't, the sacs will burst, and she will die a horrible death.

You control Lotos in two different ways. Use the mouse to control the direction she faces, and use the up arrow key to walk forward — or you can turn her using the side arrow keys and walk forward with the up arrow. Switch between the two modes by pressing the backspace key. In either case, pressing the left mouse button will fire your machine gun or perform an action on an object. You can perform stunts by holding down the shift key and pressing a directional arrow. You can also run by holding down the control key and pressing the up arrow key. To jump, double-tap the control key, and make sure you're facing the direction you want to jump in.

You can access the list of controls at your disposal by pressing F5. As you travel, your "ghost" companion, Dumaine (who keeps in touch using a control panel imbedded in Lotos' palm) will explain your next goal and how to get there. Obviously, your first goal is to survive. If you have to kill some creatures in order to do so, well, that's the nature of life as an assassin.

Sometimes you can get the enemy to catch himself on fire, and watch him die without having to fire a shot.

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RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Bust a Move 2

Company: Acclaim
Tech Support: (516) 759-7900
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Puzzle Game
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 10MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \BAM2DEMO\SETUP.EXE (for Win95)
\BAM2DOS\INSTALL.BAT (for DOS)

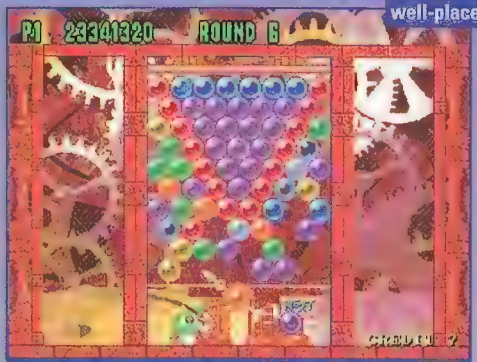
If you're a fan of enticing action/puzzle games along the lines of *Tetris* or *Baku Baku*, you'll enjoy *Bust A Move 2*. Just like those other games, it's deceptively simple: Your job is to get rid of all the colored bubbles before they reach the bottom of the screen. You accomplish this by lining up three or more colored spheres so they're touching each other. If three of the same color touch, they disappear.

The trick comes in when you realize that any balls left hanging in mid-air after the three or more bubbles disappear will also fall. You launch the colored balls from the bottom of the screen, aiming where you want to place it by lining up the arrow. Use the cursor keys to move the arrow back and forth, and the spacebar to fire the ball. You can see what color is next by looking next to the launcher.

You can bounce balls off the wall, and they'll stick to any other ball on the slightest contact. Be careful when you shoot, because if you even lightly graze another ball, it's stuck fast, and it'll be harder for you to reach the original sphere you were aiming for. Use the walls well, and keep an eye on what color is next. There are many cases when you can get rid of far more spheres than you thought possible with a single shot — look for opportunities when a single color surrounds other colors, and try to get the whole string of them to vanish.

The demo contains three levels of the addictive game, but the full version has much, much more in store, including multi-player options that'll set up fierce competitions between you and your friends.

The first few levels of *Bust A Move 2* are introductory. A few well-placed shots will end the level for you.



Don't let the early levels fool you; this game can get pretty hectic if you let the bubbles pile up.

Absolute Pinball

Title: Absolute Pinball
Company: 21st Century
Tech Support: (716) 872-1200
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Pinball
Required: 486; 4MB RAM; SVGA
Install: \PINBALL\INSTALL.BAT

21st Century has long been known as the creator of some of the finest pinball games on the market. That hasn't changed with *Absolute Pinball*, their latest release. The demo contains one table — Desert Run. It's timed, so you can shoot as many balls as you need to in the time allotted. Remember, though, that you waste a lot of time waiting for the scoreboard to tell you how many bonus points you got, so try not to lose the ball too often.

The flippers are controlled by the left and right shift keys. To launch the ball, press and hold the Enter key until you have as much power as you want, and release it to launch. To nudge the table a bit, press the spacebar to push it up, the Z key to nudge it to the right, and the period key to nudge it to the left. You can also press the numbers one through four on the keyboard to switch to different resolutions. We prefer number four, where you can see more of the table at once. For more challenge, reduce the resolution.

The full version of the game will contain three more tables, plus features like multi-ball and other fun pinball gadgetry. With the realistic ball physics and entertaining tables they create, 21st Century proves that they are still the leaders of the pack when it comes to pinball games.

Dream Factory is one of the other tables available in the full game.

The Desert Run table is only one of four available in the full game.

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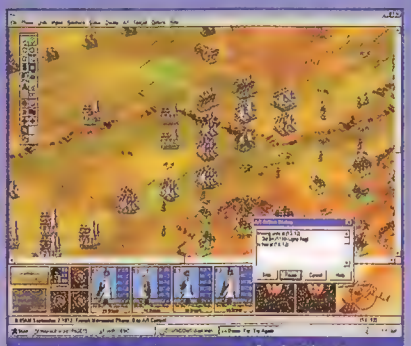
Product Information Number 280

Battleground: Bull Run and Napoleon in Russia

Company: TalonSoft
Tech Support: (410) 933-9191
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Wargame
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Windows 3.1+
Install: \NIR_DEMO\SETUP.EXE (for *Napoleon*)
\BGBRDEMO\SETUP.EXE (for *Bull Run*)

The TalonSoft Battleground games have always encompassed massive amounts of effort and research to keep them historically accurate, lovingly detailed, and graphically beautiful. Every single one depicts the scenarios it represents as close to reality as possible; it's a military history lesson on the time period the game is based on, and you'll learn just about everything you could possibly want to know. And these two games, *Napoleon in Russia* and *Bull Run*, are no different.

Each game is played in a very similar manner. It's strongly recommended that you read the online help if you're unfamiliar with the Battleground series. If you've played any of the previous titles, you should have no problem jumping right in. You'll be able to control just about any aspect of the battle, and it's up to you to see if it's possible to turn the tides of the past.



Napoleon in Russia recreates the battle at Borodino, where the French leader confronts the Tsar of Russia, Alexander, in his own territory.

Take a look at the pullouts for a quick understanding of the toolbar. The toolbar is very similar for both scenarios, but they vary enough so that you might want to examine them carefully when you start to play. Each scenario has two help files — one that teaches you how to use the interface (NIR.HLP for *Napoleon in Russia* and BGR.HLP for *Bull Run*), and a separate help file called NOTES. HLP that describes the historical significance of each battle. Not only do they contain an overall summary of the actual battles, but a description of what could have been, and why things turned out they way they did.

The Toolbox

1. NEXT - Advance to the next phase
2. ZOOM - Toggle display between Normal and Zoom-Out view
3. COUNTERCLOCKWISE - Turn the Selected units counterclockwise
4. CLOCKWISE - Turn the Selected units clockwise
5. ABOUT FACE - Turn the Selected units about face
6. CHANGE FORMATION - Change the formation of the Selected units
7. SKIRMISHER/SQUADRON - Deploy or recall a skirmisher or squadron unit
8. SQUARE - Change the Selected units into or out of square formation
9. UNITS - Toggle the display of units on the map
10. BASES - Toggle the display of unit bases on the 3D map
11. ARTILLERY - Display the Artillery Dialog
12. MELEE - Resolve the current melee
13. DISPLAY LOW AMMO - Highlight units that are low or have no ammo, or are uncrewed
14. DISPLAY SPOTTED - Highlight spotted units
15. DISPLAY MOVED - Highlight units that have moved
16. DISPLAY FIRED/FOUGHT - Highlight units that have fired or fought
17. DISPLAY DISRUPTED - Highlight units that are disrupted
18. DISPLAY ORG - Highlight units in same organization as Selected units
19. FULL MAP - Toggle Full Map mode
20. VISIBLE HEXES - Toggle the display showing hexes visible from the current Hot Spot hex
21. OBJECTIVES - Toggle the display of objective hexes on the map
22. JUMP WINDOW - Display the Jump Window
23. NEXT STACK - Jump to the next stack to be processed
24. A/I - Complete current phase under A/I

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Alpha Blending/Fog	●		●
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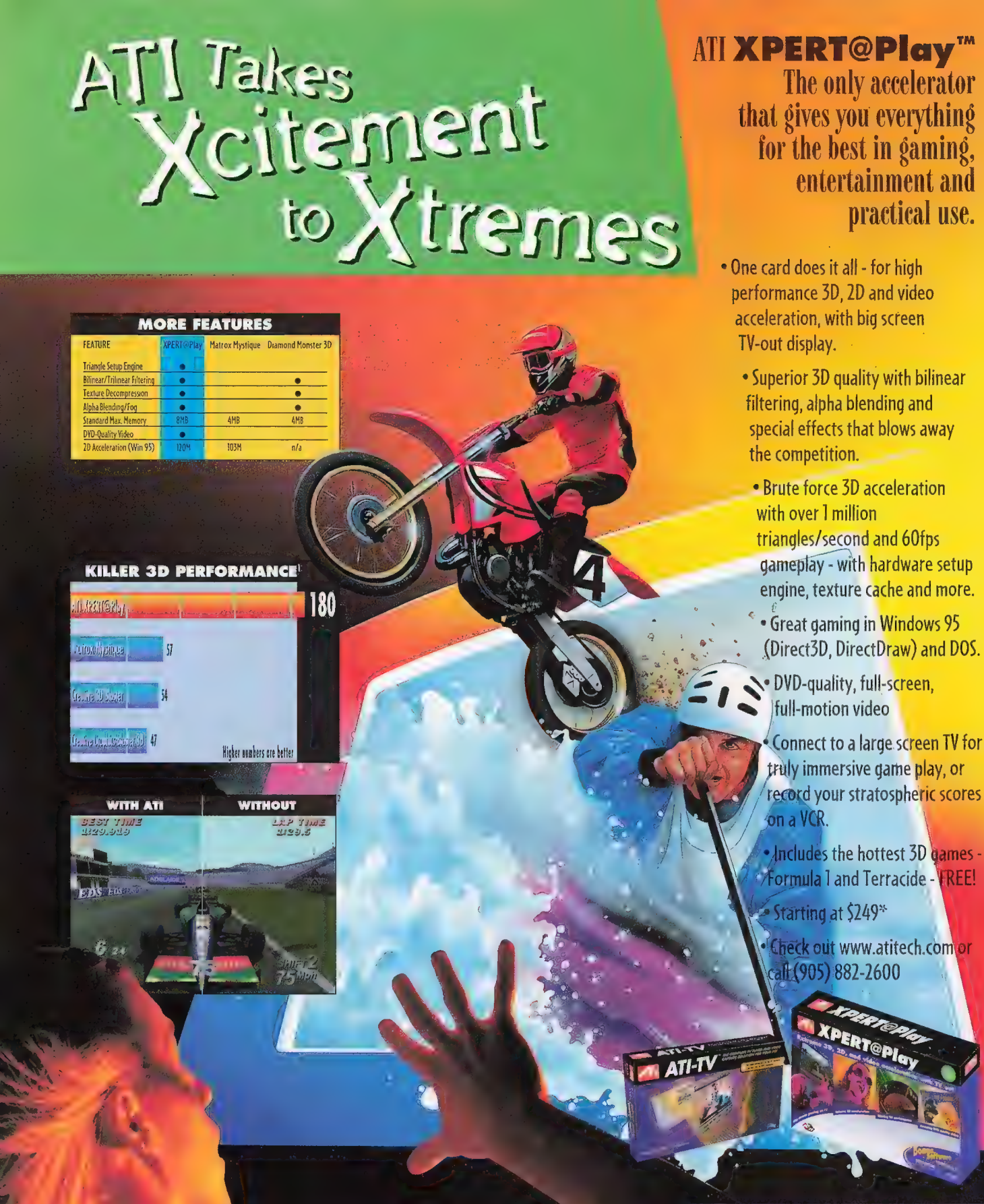
DVD-Quality Video	●		
2D Acceleration (Win 95)	120M	103M	n/a



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Now You See It.

Product Information Number 90

Ardennes Offensive

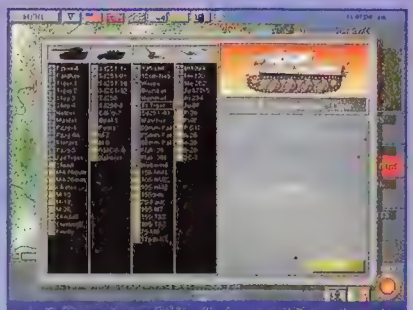
Win95

Company: SSI
Tech Support: (408) 737-6850
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Wargame
Required: Windows 95, Pentium, 8MB RAM 16MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \TAODEMO\TAODEMO.EXE

It was the last German offensive into the West. The battle of Ardennes will live long as one of the most important fights of World War Two. Strategic Simulations Inc. launches its new series of wargames, Decisive Battles of WWII, with this simulation of those fateful days in the Ardennes Forest, when a German surprise attack against American forces raged over a 60-mile wide front and drove 45 miles into Allied lines.

You play one of eight different scenarios, ranging from the tutorial you'll play in the demo to the entire Ardennes campaign in the full game. The demo puts you on Germany's side for the maximum challenge, but in the full version, you can play either side and combat a friend over a modem, local area network (LAN), or even over E-mail.

A quick look at the diagrams here will help you understand gameplay. Once you start, click on Menu at the top right and choose Briefing from the next menu. From there, you can read some tips about how to play and what sort of strategy you should be looking for. The game isn't easy to pick up quickly, so refer to these pullouts often. You can also right-click on most buttons to see their function.



The full version of *The Ardennes Offensive* will contain an online encyclopedia.

Commands

1. Stack Information
2. Show Where Unit Can Move
3. Move Unit Along Path
4. De-select Stack
5. Center Map on Selected Unit
6. Cancel Path Movement
7. Leave Stack for this Turn
8. Next Unit
9. Undo
10. Ignore Unit Until Selected
11. Strategic Map
12. Air Missions
13. Supply Information
14. Motor Pool
15. Armor Replacements
16. Show Control
17. Darkens Units Incapable of Combat
18. Remove Units
19. Show Hexes Supplied at Start of Turn
20. End Turn
21. Menu
22. Victory Dialog
23. Allied Order of Battle
24. Axis Order of Battle
25. Show Map with Replay Functions
26. Calendar
27. Equipment Details

MAKE ONE
MISTAKE
AND YOU'RE
HISTORY.

PLANET EXPLORER
BYZANTINE
THE BETRAYAL

A dangerously authentic world

where the characters, places and

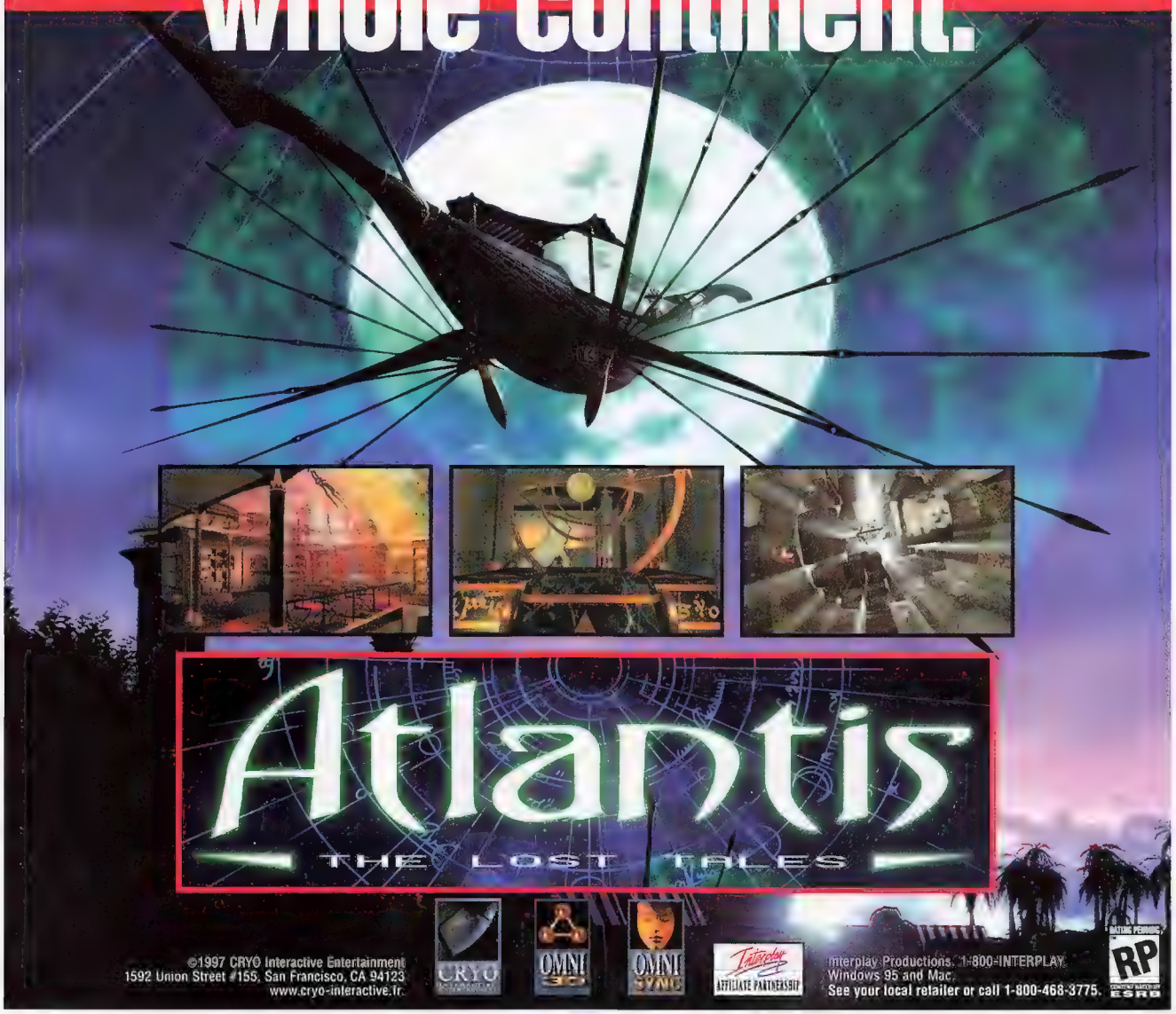
mysteries are so real...you may never

solve your way out.

Coming this fall from
Discovery CHANNEL MULTIMEDIA
www.planetexplorer.com

Product Information Number 121

Some people lose their car keys. These people lost a whole continent.



Uncover the mysteries of an advanced civilization in this epic game of adventure. Breathtaking visuals. Exotic locations. Plot twists and intrigue. All to be found in Atlantis.

Product Information Number 117

History of the World

Company: Avalon Hill
Tech Support: *ahgames@aol.com*
Category: Strategy
Required: 486/66; 8MB RAM; 18MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \HOTWDEMO\SETUP.EXE

Based on the boardgame of the same name, Avalon Hill's *History of the World* spans seven epochs of human history. From the earliest civilizations to modern times, you'll have to use your wits and a bit of luck to score higher than your opponents.

The demo spans two epochs. The game begins with each player (the demo is set up for three — you and two computer-controlled opponents) drawing an empire to control. Each empire has different strengths, which are listed at the bottom right of the screen when you begin choosing empires. If you like, you can pass the empire you draw to the next player, in hopes of getting a stronger one. If someone passes an empire on to you, you must keep it and automatically give the empire you draw to the next player. Once all the empires are assigned, the round begins. Who goes first depends on which empires were drawn.

To get going on your turn, you must first start your empire by clicking on the fortress icon on your empire card (if you don't see it, press F2 to make it appear). After your empire is started in its default location, you can place armies. Right-click on an adjacent land and choose "Place Army." You can only build from adjacent lands. The number of armies you have depends on the strength of your empire.

Certain lands have resources (the pick-and-shovel icon). If you control two of these resources (you have at least one army in each land), then your people will build a monument to you, earning you more points. You can also stack units in a single land to protect valuable items, like resources or monuments. You can have no more than three units in any one land, though. If you have any ships, you need to place them at sea.

To end your turn, click on the blue arrow next to the disc icon in the toolbar. The computer players will then take their turn, and you can watch what they do. To speed up the action, click on the plus sign next to the clock on the turn window.

That's really all there is to it when it comes to playing the basics, but what really makes the game dynamic is its set of Event Cards. The Event Cards do different things, like give you an advantage during combat, or destroy precious resources belonging to an opponent. To take a look at your event cards, scroll through them by clicking Next on the Event Card window. Some need to be played during your turn, and others require playing before your turn starts. To play a card at an appropriate time, select it and choose Play. You can only play two events during a single Epoch, and you can only play each event once, so make it good!

The full version of the game will contain seven full epochs, videos for each event card, and a voice-over tutorial that walks you through the subtleties of play. It will also contain extensive help, more than 50 empires and 60 events to play, and an online encyclopedia that details all of the empires played in the game. And, of course, it will also have multi-player options for modem play, or play by E-mail.

Avalon Hill's conversion of the boardgame *History of the World* challenges you to forge an empire.

EVOLVE OR DIE
Evolution
THE GAME OF INTELLIGENT LIFE
A Darwinian strategy game where you either get smart... or go extinct.
Coming this fall from
Discovery CHANNEL MULTIMEDIA
evolution.discovery.com
Product Information Number 122

YOU'VE LOOKED

Even your high school yearbook picture was more becoming than this. But as an alien, glamour is not high on your agenda. So, bust out of the traditional strategy game mold, morph into a human and make enemies with your friends. Conquest Earth is a world you'll want to step into very carefully.

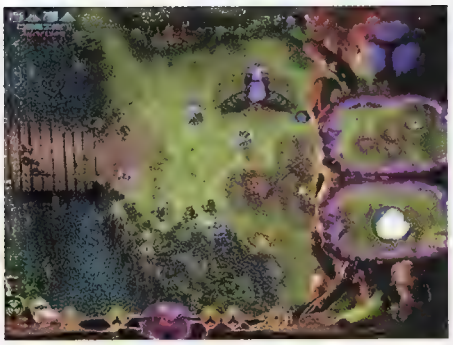
"AMAZING GRAPHIC EFFECTS"
COMPUTER PLAYER

"GLORIOUSLY DETAILED REAL-TIME ACTION"
PC GAMER

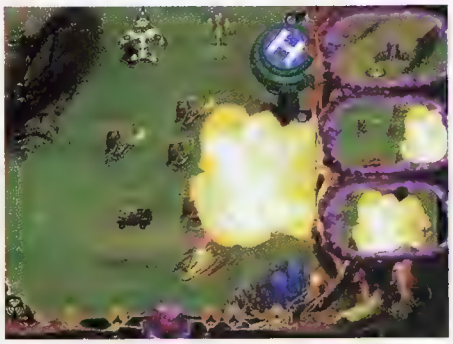
CONQUEST EARTH

WHERE STRATEGY TAKES ON A NEW FORM

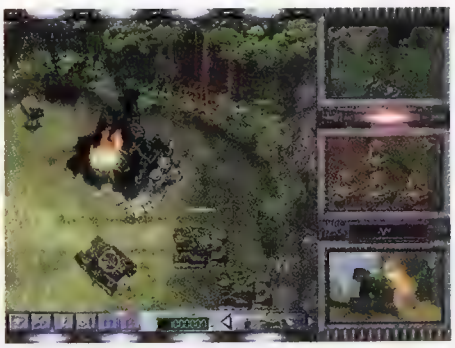
BETTER.



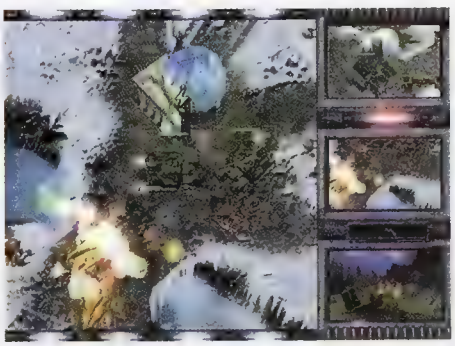
You can play either side in this intergalactic strategy game. Instantly morph into a weapon or battle tank—even a human being.



When playing the alien side, you'll experience a unique interface with different rules and capabilities. You'll employ never-before-seen tactics and strategies to foil your human counterparts.



Vary your strategy to keep your opponents guessing. Keep track by monitoring them through your interface portals. With over 65,000 colors, the action will come to life like never before.



Playing the human side, you'll need to manage your resources wisely. Thwart the aliens' attempt to mine oxygen from the atmosphere. Only one race will remain standing after this war. Make sure its yours.

WWW.CONQUESTEARTH.COM

Product Information Number 135

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EIDOS INTERACTIVE

"CONFLICT" MY ASS

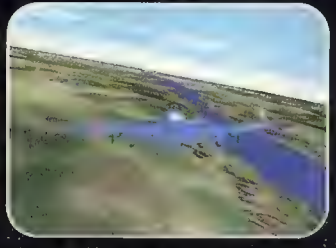
THIS IS WAR

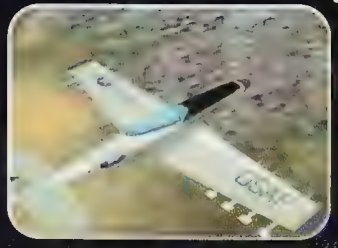
COMING THIS FALL ON WINDOWS® 95

They called it the Korean "Conflict." But we'll let you be the judge. Put yourself in the pilot seat of an F-86 Sabre jet, fly one of its 45 missions ripped directly from the pages of history, and engage in brutal combat with a MIG-15 while a pack of bogeys blast away at your tail. Then tell us if you think it's still a "Conflict."

SABRE ACE

CONFLICT OVER KOREA





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Virgin INTERactive

Product Information Number 340

Need for Speed 2

Win95

Company: Electronic Arts
Tech Support: (415) 572-2787
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Arcade
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 22MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \NFSDEMO\SETUP.EXE

How would you like to drive the Ferrari F50? Or how about the McLaren F1? Wouldn't it be a joy to get behind the wheel of the Isdera 112i? That's what Electronic Arts lets you do in *Need for Speed 2*, a racing game that puts some of today's hottest sports cars on the road, and lets you drive them.

The demo contains the Pacific Spirit track, and you drive the Ford GT90. The default control is the keyboard — the up arrow key will accelerate, down will brake, and the side keys will steer your car left and right. The spacebar will trigger the hand-brake for those extra-sharp turns. The A key will shift up, while the Z key will shift down. Knowing how to shift will come in handy if you have to back up in a hurry. The B key lets you take a glance behind your car, and the C key rotates your view through several different cameras. And, just for kicks, the H key will honk your horn.

All of the controls are configurable from the Options menu, so you can use a joystick or gamepad. You can also adjust the graphic detail if you have a slower machine, or press F2 during the race to cycle through the different graphic modes. Although the demo is pretty straightforward, it might be difficult to get ahead of the pack and finish the race first.

Many of the tracks in the full version have different types of road that can either help or hinder your racing position.

Sometimes those Sunday drivers get in the way, and then the whole race is up in the air!

Drive the track a few times, and soon you'll know when to put the pedal to the metal and when to slow down a bit. Some of the turns are tricky, so you might want to keep your foot off of the gas when going into a particularly difficult one. On the other hand, the GT90 holds the road pretty well, so you can push the throttle to the max through some S-curves and still stay on the mark if you keep your line as straight as possible.

The full version of the game contains a total of eight cars and support for multi-player games over a modem, serial connection, or local area network.

You can also race in tournaments and compare notes with your friends to see who is the ultimate driving champion.

Sentient

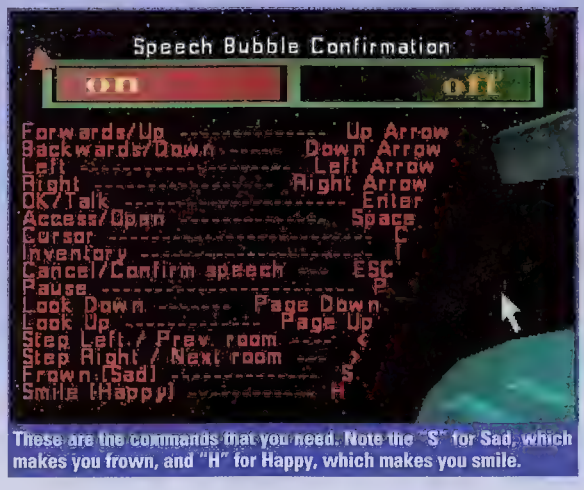
Company: Psygnosis
Tech Support: (415) 655-5683
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Adventure
Required: Pentium; 16MB RAM; 2MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \SETUP.EXE (for Win 95) \INSTALL.BAT (for DOS)

Sentient puts you in the shoes of Garrit Sherova, a man sent to the space station Icarus to investigate a strange disease attacking the crew. The station, in orbit around a class-A star rich in Kenyon — the only source of energy left in the universe — has been mining deeper than any other station. It's believed the strange disease, which accelerates cell decay and affects the victim's memory, is caused from digging deeper into the star than any other station has before.

The demo puts you into Garrit's shoes just after a solar flare hits the station, knocking down the shields and damaging whole levels of the Icarus. Another flare is on its way, and unless you can get the shields up in ten minutes, the station will explode. Once you've taken care of that, you can worry about the fact that there's only 15 minutes worth of oxygen left on the current deck.

You see the world through Garrit's eyes. Control his movement with the keyboard. For a list of the commands you'll use to play the game, take a look at the diagram here. Most of the demo centers on talking to other crew members — when you get into a discussion, you have a choice of things to talk about. Each choice has a sub-choice, which makes for some pretty complex conversations when you go four or five levels deep. Don't let the sophistication of the dialog distract you, though — you have to get the items you need and get those shields back up before the place is destroyed, so don't try asking everyone about everything.

The full game contains about 60 characters to interact with and a whole station to explore. The mystery of why people are being affected by this strange disease, and whether or not it comes from the unusual star, remains to be discovered. Even the demo, small in comparison to the full game, contains quite a few characters and actions you must perform. The adventure is so open-ended, though, that you'll be hard pressed to win the first time through. Take notes on what you see and where, and if all else fails, take a look at the full walk-through for the demo at the end of the README.TXT file in the root directory of *The CD*.



These are the commands that you need. Note the "S" for Sad, which makes you frown, and "H" for Happy, which makes you smile.

HINT

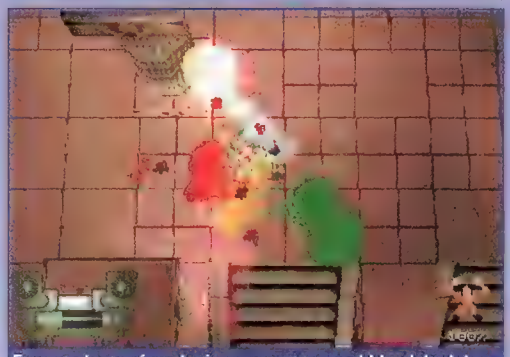
Okay, we'll admit it. It took us a while to figure out what to do immediately upon starting the demo. As you'll soon notice, both of the doors leading out of the room you're trapped in are locked. Look for the smoking computer over in the corner. Right above where the smoke issues, use your computer override device on the panel. That will unlock the doors and open the rest of the level to you.

Machine Hunter

Win95

Company: MGM Interactive
Tech Support: *www.machinehunter.com*
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 7MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: \MHDEMO\SETUP.EXE

It's a shoot-'em-up like you've never seen before. Viewed from a top-down perspective, this shooter will have you running in one direction and firing in another as robots and monsters come at you from all angles. Take a look at the commands listed here to learn how to fight your way to victory. You'll have to be quick with the trigger finger, and keep an eye on your surroundings if you want to make it through alive.



Expect plenty of explosions, monsters, and bloodshed during your adventures through this 3D dungeon.

The demo contains the first level of the game.

You need to locate and rescue a hostage, then make your way to the exit. In order to find the exit, though, you'll have to blast your way through a wall. You start out with a couple of pistols at your disposal, but you can upgrade your weaponry by taking over robots. Shoot a robot enough times, and it'll become helpless. Run over it, and you'll be in control.

You'll have several of these robots to take on, so don't worry if you lose your first one.

Because you can move one direction and fire in another, the keyboard seems to be the best tool to use to complete the game. Just keep in mind that if you hold two directions down at the same time, you can travel and fire on a diagonal.

For example, to fire below you and to the left, hold down G and H at the same time. That'll help you get at those pesky enemies in hard-to-reach places.

CONTROL KEYS

Move up	↑
Move Down	↓
Move Left	←
Move Right	→
Fire Up	Y
Fire Down	H
Fire Left	G
Fire Right	J
Strafe	0

Z.A.R.

Company: Maddox Games, Ltd.
Tech Support: *maddox@auricvision.com*
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 7MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \ZARDEMO\SETUP.EXE (Win95) See Below (DOS)

Z.A.R. stands for Zone of Artificial Resources. That's pretty much all you need to know to play this game — it's basically a first-person action shoot-'em-up, but with a few twists from what you'd normally expect. Think of it as a mix between *Doom* and *MechWarrior 2*, and you'll have some idea of what we mean.

Pay close attention to the messages you'll receive during the demo. You access them by clicking the "I" button at the top of the screen.

You pilot a powerful ship known as a Hermit. Your mission in the demo is to annihilate groups of communications transmitters so the haywire computer in control of the zone is blinded. While you seek out the transmitters, you'll have to watch for robots that will try to stop you. Just give them a taste of your ammo, and they'll stop bothering you — they'll be in too many pieces!

You control the game with a combination of mouse and keyboard. Use the cursor keys to move forward and back, and the mouse will change your direction and let you look up and down. You fire your weapon with the left mouse button and jump into the air with the right button.

To switch weapons, just press the number keys corresponding to the weapon you want. At the bottom of the screen is a list of numbers — any number shown in bold means you have the weapon corresponding to that number. If there's a line over the top, that's the weapon currently readied. There's also a number on the left that lets you know how much energy you have left. Run out, and you're dead. The number on the right is the amount of ammo left for the currently readied weapon.

The demo lets you play with the plasma gun, machine gun, cannon, and rocket launcher. The full version gives you ten weapons to choose from, and many more enemies. You can also play the game over a local area network with as many as 16 people.

When you complete your mission, look for this white cloud spewing white bits — that's your ride home.

INSTALLATION NOTE: If you do not want to use Windows to install *Z.A.R.*, you need to copy the contents of \ZARDOS from *The CD* to your hard drive, then run the file SETSOUND.BAT. The easiest thing to do, though, is run the file \ZARDEMO\SETUP.EXE from *The CD* using Windows 3.1 or 95.

Maybe he's not just dreaming about chasing squirrels...

As your dog sits glaring at you while you're absorbed in the latest Only for Pentium®/Only for Windows® 95 release from Epic MegaGames, you assume he's just sick of waiting for his evening walk.

But perhaps a deeper, darker emotion lurks behind those penetrating canine eyes... jealousy!

After all, chasing a squirrel up a tree is good for kicks, but it hardly compares to a fight to the death with 800 pounds of bazooka-toting alien muscle.

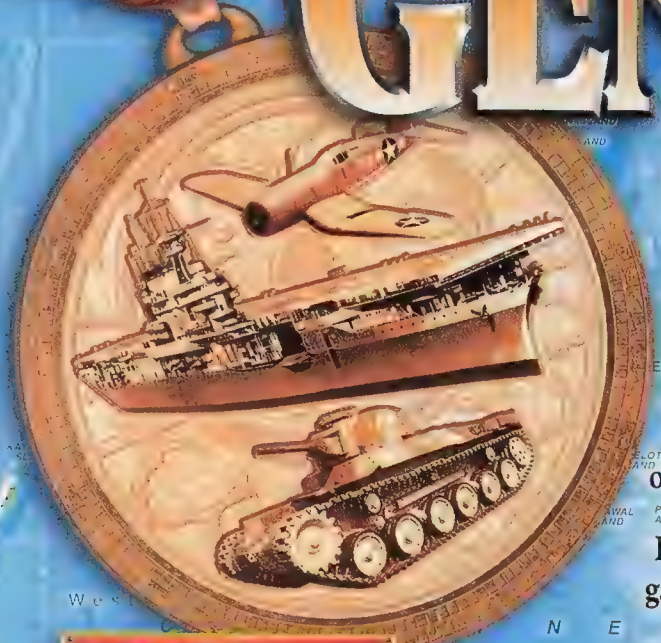
Unfortunately, it's extremely difficult to manipulate a joystick when you don't have opposable thumbs.

Still, you can't blame a dog for dreaming...

EPIC MEGAGAMES

Don't just dream about it, check out WWW.EPICGAMES.COM to find out more.

PACIFIC GENERAL™



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SSI
A MINDSCAPE® COMPANY

You Don't Know Jack Vol. 2/Sports

Company: Berkeley Systems
Tech Support: (425) 644-4343
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Trivia Game
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 27MB hard-drive space (for both); SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \YDKJDEMO\SETUP.EXE (Vol. 2)
YDKJDEMO\SODEMO.EXE (Sports)

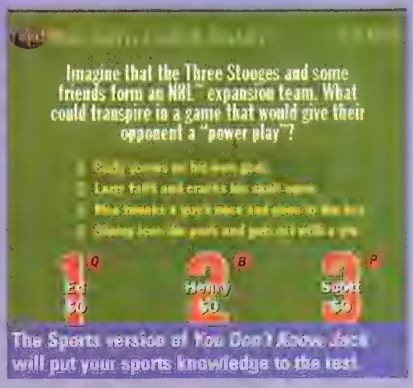
You Don't Know Jack has received acclaim as the best trivia game to appear on the PC. Pitting as many as three players in a competition to answer trivia questions, the game has the feel of a funny, mile-a-minute game show — even bystanders are entertained.

We've got two demos for you to try out on *The CD — You Don't Know Jack Volume 2*, which adds all new questions and even some new kinds of questions to the excellent original, and *You Don't Know Jack Sports*, for the sports buff in you.

Playing the game is simple. The demo automatically sets up three players and assigns them names, so if you have two friends handy, you might want to go grab them. The host then shows you three categories to choose from; if it's your turn, you pick a category by pressing the corresponding number key. The host will ask the question, and you'll see four possible answers. Any player can answer the question by buzzing in (Player One buzzes with the letter Q, Player Two with B, and Player Three with P). Once you've buzzed in, you have only a few seconds to pick an answer. If you get it right, you'll get money. If you get it wrong, you'll lose money. Other types of questions are Fill In The Blank and Dis or Dat. Fill in the Blank asks a question, and then you must type in the word missing from a phrase on-screen. Dis or Dat is a bit harder — you'll have two choices, and the game will present you with a word or phrase. You decide if it applies to one clue or the other, or skip it. There are seven comparisons, and you earn money for a right answer, or lose money for an incorrect answer.

Don't worry if that sounds a bit complicated — the game will explain it to you as you go along.

The full versions of the games contain hundreds of questions, plus the dreaded Jack Attack final round of play. You can play single games of seven or 21 questions, or even hold tournaments for large groups of people.


Imagine that the Three Stooges and some friends form an NBL™ expansion team. What could transpire in a game that would give their opponent a "power play"?
Q
B
P
The Sports version of *You Don't Know Jack* will put your sports knowledge to the test.

Also, be sure to check out the *You Don't Know Jack* online game (*www.bezerk.com*), which will let you play a game with one other competitor over the Internet. The 15-question games are updated twice a week, so there's always a new challenge waiting.

Pandemonium

Win95

Company: Crystal Dynamics
Tech Support: (415) 473-3434
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Arcade
Required: Windows 95, Pentium, 16MB RAM, 14MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install:\PANDEMON\SETUP.EXE

Now, here's an arcade-style platform shooter with a twist! It plays like a classic 2D scroller, but you navigate through a 3D world; the camera follows your movement, keeping you in sight at all times, even when walking up a spiral staircase! You're in control of Nikki, one of two characters from the game. In this three-level demo, you'll have to avoid fiery spouts, wicked spikes, and some mean critters that are up to no good.

Controlling the game is simplicity itself, although it might take some work to get it to function right. The default settings have you using A to go left, S to go right, Z to crouch, and Page Up to go up. That can be awkward, so you might want to visit the Options menu and set the cursor keys to control Nikki's movement. The spacebar will make Nikki jump, and if you manage to find a special weapon power-up, the Control key will fire it off. We highly recommend using a gamepad or joystick if you've got one; if it's already configured under Windows 95, the game will automatically use it. The spacebar will still make Nikki jump, but you'll fire your weapon by pressing Button 1 on your gamepad or joystick (this is also configurable under the Options menu, so you can set it up however you like).

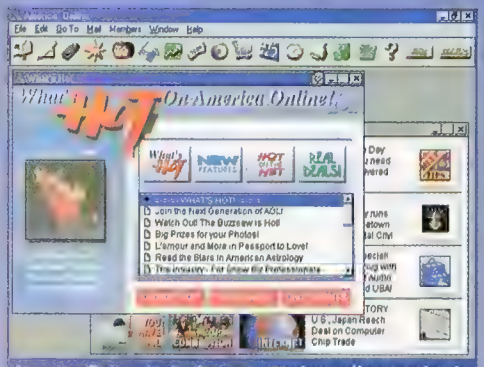
There are objects in the game you can use, like the trampolines. Jump on a trampoline and press jump again just as you're launching from it, and you'll jump even higher. Nikki also has a special move — if you press jump a second time at the peak of her first jump, you'll perform a second jump for even more height. This will come in handy for making some of the more difficult leaps, as well as landing on the heads of the creatures that are out to get you.

Jump on the heads of the creatures wandering around to make them disappear.

The game works best with a 3Dfx-based graphics accelerator card, but if you don't have one, you can still choose from a variety of resolutions to balance gameplay with visual quality. However you play the game, your main goal will be to reach the end of the levels — although there are several different paths you can take to get there, some of them more profitable than others.

HINT

Toward the very beginning of the demo, you'll notice a little hole in the ground near a trampoline. Jump down through the hole, and you'll pick up a special weapon. Fire it at the target to the left, and you'll get some coins that you have to catch before they fall though the floor. The same weapon will also come in handy when it comes time to take care of some of the creatures wandering around. It doesn't last long, though, so make use of it while you have it!



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America Online

Tech Support: (800) 872-3338
Required: 486; 4MB RAM; 6MB hard-drive space; VGA; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \AOL\SETUP.EXE

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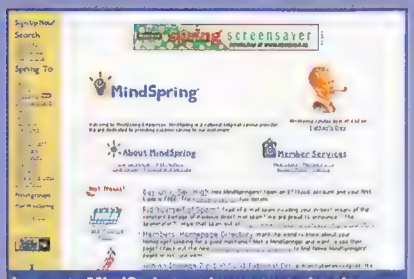

Log on to MindSpring, and you can cruise the Internet in many different ways.

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If you use Microsoft's Dial-Up Networking rather than the default Pipeline software, you can also have a TCP/IP connection to the Internet, a necessary component for all those multi-player games that use TCP/IP connections, like *Quake*, *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*, and *Interstate '76*. You can also opt to use any utilities that use TCP/IP connections, like *The Palace* online chat.

With its realistic pricing and a whole slew of services available, MindSpring is a good jumping-off point for anyone wanting to get onto the Internet. Best of all, if you install the software from *The CD*, the $25 launching fee will be waived.

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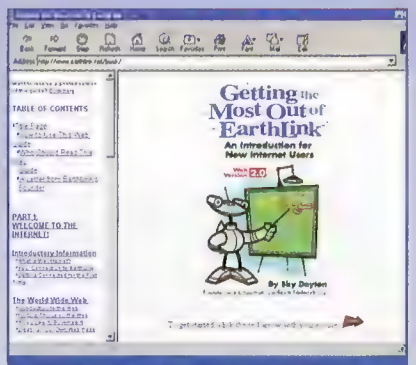
EarthLink

Tech Support: (800) 719-4660
Category: Online Service
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 25MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher; 14.4Kbps or faster modem
Install: \MSPRING\SETUP.EXE



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Product Information Number 101

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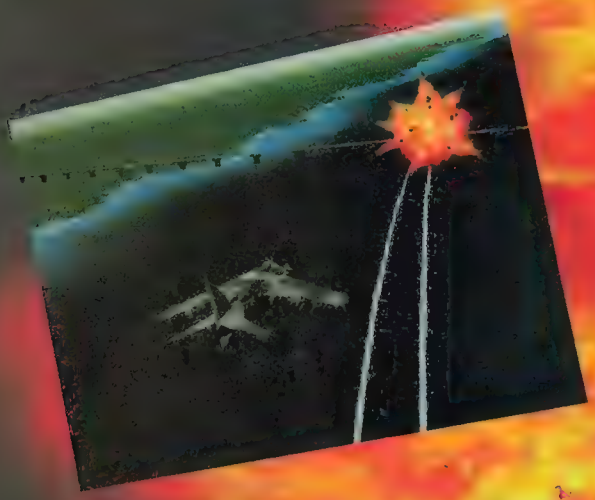

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Product Information Number 130

The reviews are going to his head.

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Product Information Number 95

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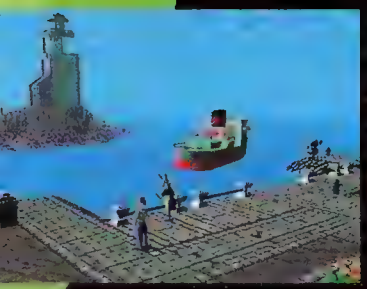
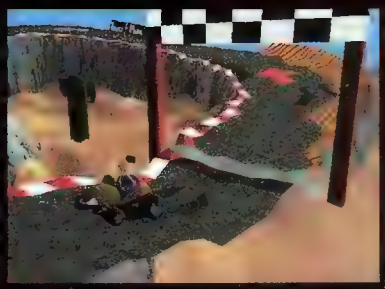
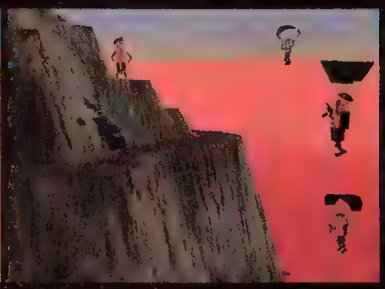


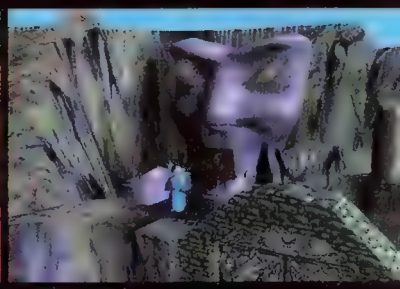
"...One of the most significant achievements in adventure gaming in a long time."
— PC Games



"Adventure gamers should get ready to set aside a large chunk of their summer."
— GameSpot



"Perhaps the most desperately anticipated sequel since Civilization 2."
— Next Generation



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Daikatana

Hack your way through the ages in ION Storm's debut

Time travel and an enchanted samurai sword are just the beginning, as we get a peek at the next game from John Romero, one of the creators of *Doom* and *Quake*.

— Jason Bates

FYI. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Daikatana
Category: First-person shooter
Developer: ION Storm
Publisher: Eidos Interactive, 303 Sacramento St., San Francisco, CA 94111 (415) 616-2022
Projected price: TBA
Percentage complete: 50%

In a nutshell:

Take on the role of Hiro Miyamoto, a 25th century archaeology student turned hero. He travels back in time with two companions hoping to recover an ancient samurai sword, the Daikatana.

What's so special?

Daikatana uses the *Quake* engine, guaranteeing a solid gameplay platform, and adds new elements such as companion characters and character attributes.

Why should I care?

The game is being designed by John Romero, creator of such classics as *Wolfenstein 3D*, *Doom*, and *Quake*, games that created and defined the genre. This will be the first game from Romero since he left id Software and started his own company, ION Storm.

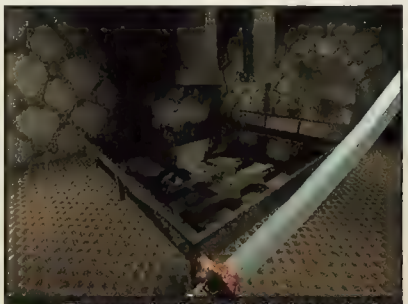
And when's it coming out?

Winter 97

With so many high-profile *Quake*-style games in the works, standing out from the pack is going to take something extra special. But if anyone has that magic touch, it would have to be John Romero, who helped create this genre while at id Software, with such classics as *Wolfenstein 3D*, *Doom*, and *Quake*. Now he's on his own at ION Storm, and ready to reveal *Daikatana*, the next step in game design for this genre.

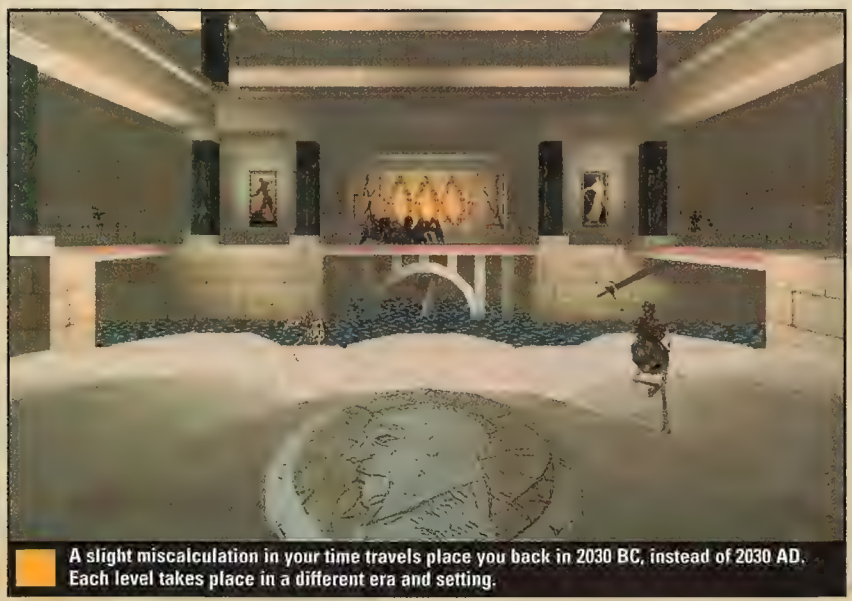
Romero realizes that he has a lot of competition this time around. "Hopefully, many features will help differentiate *Daikatana* from the rest of the pack," says Romero. "First on the list would be content — *Daikatana* has an awful lot of content in all departments: music, sound, monsters, graphics. It also has four different time periods which ensures that the player won't get bored looking at, or listening to, the same old stuff throughout the game."

One knock against *Quake* was that many of the levels looked the same — a dark, ominous techno-dungeon, with the same creatures and weapons reappearing at regular intervals. That won't be the case with *Daikatana*, where each of the four worlds has its own unique look. There are five sets of seven weapons, one from each time period, plus a special seven powers invested in the Daikatana — the mystical samurai sword that gives the game its name.



The game begins in the far future, in the year 2455.

A number of designers are working on each of the four episodes, and there will be up to eight different deathmatch-only maps as well, levels that Romero is himself creating. There will also be 64 different monsters in the game, ranging from spiders and skeletons to robots and mechanized animals. One of these, the Ragemaster 5000, is a giant robot with

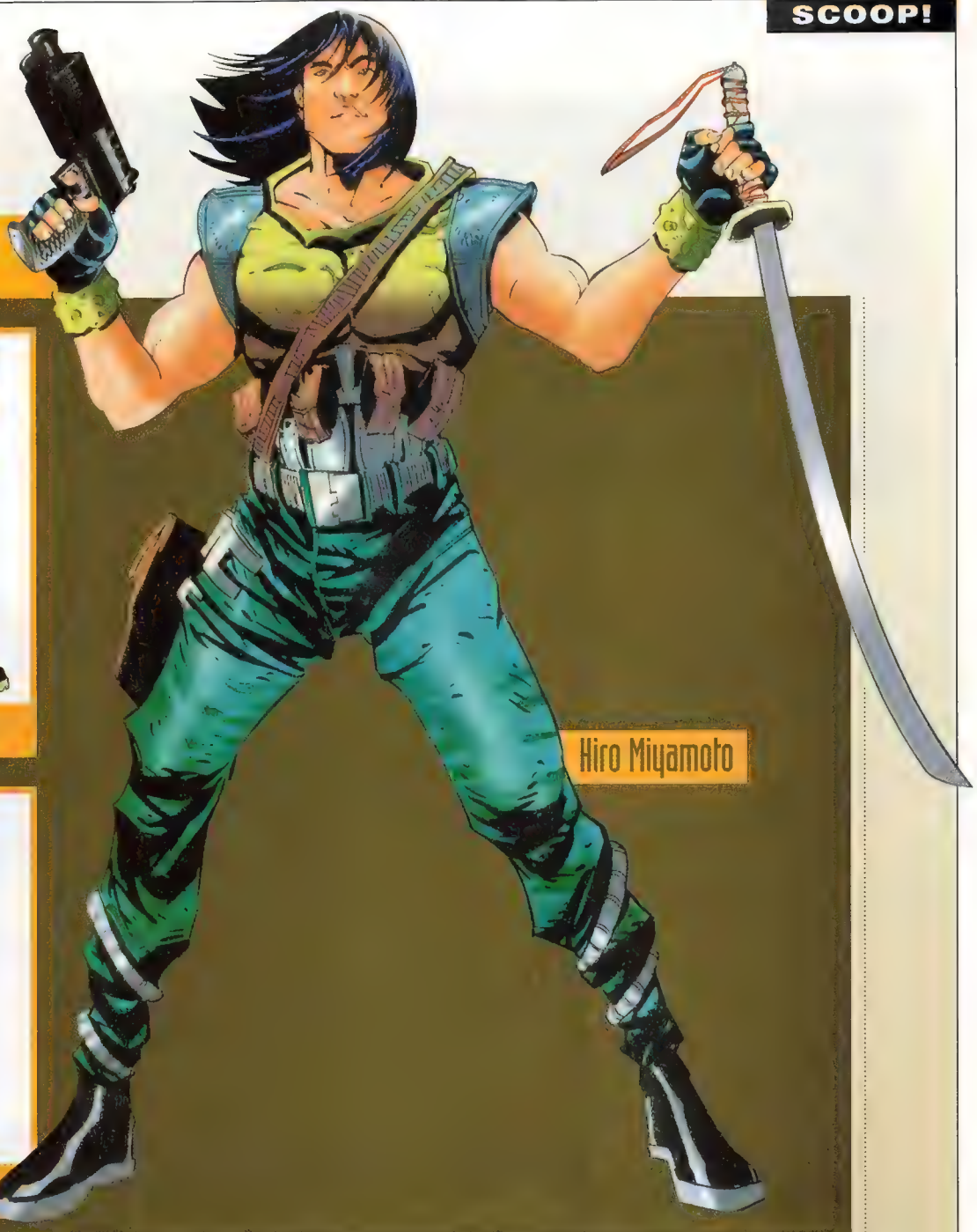


A slight miscalculation in your time travels place you back in 2030 BC, instead of 2030 AD. Each level takes place in a different era and setting.

The Heroes

Superfly Johnson

Mikiko Ebihara



Hiro Miyamoto

sledgehammer arms that patrols the 2455 AD Fortress, the first episode in the game. "He travels slow, but hits hard," says Romero. Other monsters from the first episode include the RoboCo Crox, a robot crocodile that dwells in the swamp outside the Fortress, and the RoboCo Sludge Minion who patrols its sewers. "Of course, they are both programmed to destroy you on sight," says Romero.

But you won't have to face these creatures on your own. "A major feature of *Daikatana* is that you adventure through the game with two computer-controlled characters that help you on your journey," says Romero. ION Storm is lining up professional voice talent to bring the characters to life. "Everything the characters in the game say is actually spoken instead of read on the screen."

These companions are Superfly Johnson, a brash American, and Mikiko Ebihara, the daughter of your mentor, a murdered archaeologist who discovered the Daikatana. But you won't actually control these characters like wingmen in a flight sim; rather, they will be independent actors, like Taurus in *Interstate '76*. "The other two characters, Mikiko Ebihara and Superfly Johnson, control themselves as if they were real beings. At certain points during your quest, they will ask you if it's okay for them to venture off, and at that point, you make a decision," says Romero. "That's the most amount of control you will have over them — as the team leader."

You yourself take on the role of a Hiro Miyamoto, a character named in tribute to the famous Japanese game designer, Shigeru Miyamoto. In episode one, Miyamoto must fight his way through the Fortress of 2455 AD and recover the Daikatana from those who stole it. Then, using its special power, he must travel back in time to the year 2030 and undo the harm caused by the villain. But due to a slight miscalculation, you end up in 2030 BC, four thousand years off the mark, in Ancient Greece. Only with great difficulty do you gain enough Daikatana power to leap forward in time, but only as far as the Dark Ages. Only after completing this third episode do you finally end up in the proper time and place — San Francisco in the year 2030 AD.

Another aspect of *Daikatana*, something it shares with *Hexen II*, is that your character has a series of attributes — speed, attack value, and the like — which you can increase as you complete missions. So as the missions get tougher, your character becomes more powerful.

But how will this work in multiplayer games? "When you start a 'net game, everyone starts out with no experi-

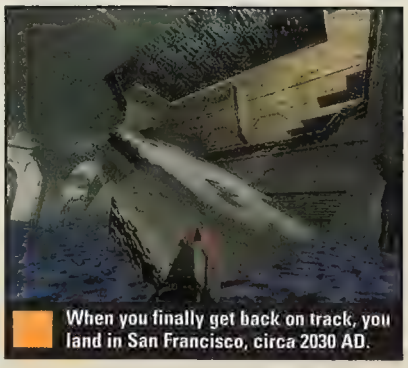
You managed to jump out of the past, but you lacked in power, and ended up in the Dark Ages, which is where the third level of *Daikatana* will take place.

ence, and it's a race to see who can amass power faster than the others," explains Romero. "You get experience points based on how powerful the player was that you killed, so if you're a newbie and you kill a 20th level player, you will get mondo experience points. But if you're a 20th level badass killing newbies, you won't go up in levels very fast, since they're practically worthless."

Though it would be possible to let people save their multi-player characters, it's not something ION Storm plans to do. "Right now, you cannot save your character on a server, but that may be something we change in the future," says Romero. "The main problem is people that will hack their stats and believe me, everyone will. Removing the possibility of hacking keeps everything even."

You'll also be able to play any of the three main characters in a multi-player game, and, as in *Eradicator*, each character will have different base attributes for speed, health, and the other traits.

With so many *Quake*-engine games competing for volunteers in the user community to run servers, ION Storm will have to take extra steps to be sure people can find a low-latency, *Daikatana* server



When you finally get back on track, you land in San Francisco, circa 2030 AD.

near them. "There will most likely be a DaikatanaSpy-type program that will do this for you," says Romero. "We also hope to start our own server that will match players up for *Daikatana* multi-player, but this is not yet confirmed."

On the technology side, the game engine has gone through some improvements since *Quake* first came out. "One nice feature is that we now have rotating objects that interact with their environment," says Romero. "We've added fog, rain, snow, and translucency." The programmers at ION are also using Windows DLL files instead of the QuakeC code. This will make them more flexible and faster to compile — but it also means there will be no DOS version of *Daikatana*. There may also be some modifications to the networking code, since Kee Kimbrell of DWANGO is on the team.

Daikatana is being designed for P133s with 16 megabytes of RAM. "The RAM requirement might increase, but the processor won't," says Romero. The 3Dfx and Rendition Verite will be supported out of the box, and any accelerator *Quake* supports will also be supported by *Daikatana*.

And what will Romero do when all is said and done? "Take a couple weeks off and think about the next game," he says.

PCG

DESIGN IS LAW

Daikatana **will be an important release for ION Storm, not only because it will be John Romero's first game since leaving id, but also because it will be ION Storm's debut title.**

One reason Romero broke with id was because he wanted a company that worked on more than one game at a time, but another factor was that he wanted to get away from id's focus on technology and spend more time on the design behind the engine, all the little details that make a title fresh and fun to play. Hence the company motto: "Design is Law."

This maxim is reflected in the size of the team Romero has put together — at least 15 people — all of whom are working on a game in which the core technology, the engine itself, is essentially done. So what are all these people doing? Design.

"I've hired a ton of people to work on this project in the content area, not the technology area," Romero says. "That states a commitment to game design, because all these people are helping me realize my concept for *Daikatana*, by creating all the artwork, monsters, maps, and music.

"I believe that music in particular is a very important, integral part of the gaming experience," he says, "and I've hired Will Loconto to work on sound and music constantly, every day. At id, we would just fly Bobby Prince in for a month to work on stuff."

Besides the difference in design philosophies, ION has a different atmosphere than id. ION has an Internet radio show, they're working on an in-house documentary, and they have a web site *(www.ionstorm.com)* that's regularly updated with stories, bits of humor, and even impromptu game reviews. They've also just moved into a penthouse suite in a Texas skyscraper, and they have their own in-house rock band.

"The attitude is: 'Let's have fun'," Romero says. "Everyone here is having fun on a daily basis, but they are doing it while creating an awesome product." But this doesn't detract from making the game, says Romero, because "the fun we're having *is* creating the game."

The Monsters

Ragemaster 5000

RoboCo Crox

RoboCo Sludge Minion

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MEAT PUPPET

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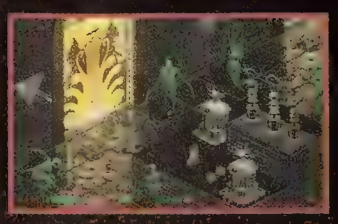

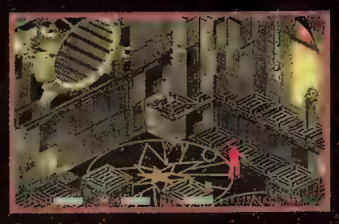

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Product Information Number 305

Star Trek: Secret of

The original crew returns for a CD-ROM adventurefest

With a cinematic story penned by Trek writer D.C. Fontana, Interplay's *Star Trek: Secret of Vulcan Fury* should satisfy Trekkers both young and old.

— Colin Williamson

FYI
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Star Trek: Secret of Vulcan Fury
Developer: Interplay
Publisher: Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 969-4263
Projected Price: $50
Percentage Complete: 80%

In a nutshell:
Star Trek: Secret of Vulcan Fury is the latest in Interplay's line of classic Trek adventure games.

What's so special?
With multiple CDs worth of striking audiovisual content and a strong, cinematic storyline, *Vulcan Fury* may be one of the richest *Star Trek* adventures to come around in a long time.

Why should I care?
Interplay's attention to graphical detail has resulted in a stunningly lifelike synthetic revival of the classic *Star Trek* players — and without a single wrinkle or toupee.

And when's it coming out?
Fall '97

It's been a while since the crew of the classic *Star Trek* made their appearance on the PC screen. Spectrum HoloByte had picked up the *Next Generation* torch with *A Final Unity*, but there haven't been many real crowd-pleasers since *Star Trek: Judgment Rites* and *Star Trek 25th Anniversary*. Interplay's superb forays into the sci-fi graphical adventure. But the best comes to those who wait, and *Star Trek: Secret of Vulcan Fury* looks to be another enjoyable entry in everyone's favorite swashbuckling space opera.

D.C. Fontana, the talented writer of countless *Trek* novels and teleplays, has loaned her pen to create the basic storyline. To help flesh out the actual game, Interplay employed a Hollywood screenwriter to work with game producer Ken Allen in creating the 300-page script. Allen explains the process of moving from linear story to adventure game: "The story flows a lot like a motion picture on the pages, but there's lots of information — between the lines — for the gameplay element."

Beginning with a bit of a *Star Trek* history lesson, a flashback to two thousand years in the past reveals a pivotal space battle in the civil war that separated the Vulcans from the Romulans. At that time, a destructive piece of technology called *Vulcan Fury* was unleashed, and sent the Romulans packing. The weapon has been unused, and hidden from the general populace ever since the war, with knowledge of its existence limited to the High Elders. But the secret may finally get out — and that's where our story begins.

Vulcan Fury has been broken down into six episodes, each of which lets you play a different character. There's the action-packed away-team episode, an episode where Scotty has to get the Enterprise up and running again (complete with a visit to the Jeffries' tube), and even a murder mystery where McCoy

Spock prepares to merge his conciousness in a traditional Vulcan Mind Meld.

The *Enterprise* goes into warp as a annihilative shockwave follows. If the whole game looks this good, we're in for a real treat.

Vulcan Fury

Is it Leonard or is it *Lightwave* software? The game's artists have even included the residue stubble from Nimoy's shaved eyebrows.

plays amateur sleuth. You'll be able to take part in the fabled Vulcan mind-meld playing as Spock in an episode that had the designers' creative juices flowing. "That's something we're having a lot of fun designing," says Allen, "what a mind meld would look and feel like — a mind meld that's quite crucial to the story." You can even expect to see some old friends from the original episodes, including the silver-tongued Cyrano Jones, the interstellar trader who brought you those troublesome tribbles.

Though it's certain to be compared to the earlier *Judgment Rites*, Allen points out a major difference in terms of camera placement. "This time, instead of having a steady camera angle, we're going to be moving, panning, and inserting cutscenes — it'll feel more like a cinematic experience," he says. This means that a wider variety of in-game views, including close-ups and long shots, will be implemented. There will be a good deal of full motion video, but not enough to bog down the user — the entire game contains 91 minutes of non-repeating cutscenes. This means that *Vulcan Fury* will ship on at least seven CD-ROMs, with the possibility of a DVD-based rerelease next year.

Instead of the cartoonish chubby sprites of the first game, all the characters will be pre-rendered for a more organic feel, while scenes in the background will have much more movement and life than a simple static picture. And those pre-rendered characters are looking frighteningly real. Interplay has spared no expense in recreating the original actors in digital format. Allen explains the process: "For the starring cast, we sculpted their heads with clay, then we used commercial hardware to scan the heads into Lightwave rendering software," he says. "There, we refined the images, added textures, and worked off photographic reference material that gives us what the character expressions were like and all the little facial details." Also, some of the Interplay team members found their heads being plaster-modeled for some of the minor character roles. The actual movement of the rendered characters, which was contracted to a motion capture studio in San Francisco, will eventually be plugged into the body meshes to create the illusion of human movement. The voices will definitely match the graphics, with the voice acting performed by the original *Star Trek* cast.

With that ever-stoic face, Kirk is ready to face adversity in any form. Hmm, we don't remember the Captain ever looking *this* good.

The interface has been nicely streamlined from the 'Golden Boy' interface of the original games. "You no longer have to try out all of the little action menu items on every little thing that's in the game," says Allen. "This keeps the player closer to the story, more involved, and more immersed, rather than struggling to think 'what's the designer have in mind here?'" It's a given that the puzzles in *Vulcan Fury* will be just as difficult as the game's predecessors, with the need to assemble items and overcome numerous obstacles. Though the hardened gamer could play through in around 30 hours, there are plenty of surprises and extra opportunities for exploration that provide a more leisurely pace to your adventuring. "You can walk over to consoles and enter rooms that have no relevance to the story — but it's interesting just to see what they look like," says Allen. "Rather than keeping the player on a strictly linear path, there's a little branching to make them feel like this is closer to a real world."

Judging by this shot of a Klingon Cruiser, those pesky, ridge-headed nasties will be weasling their way into *Vulcan Fury*.

The *Enterprise* is a large ship, and giving the user freedom to walk around was a hurdle for the team. "We wanted to make people feel like they did have free run of the *Enterprise* — but if you watch the show, all of the decks pretty much look the same. A lot of the rooms are off-limits, even in the show, so we've offered the ability to explore around twenty percent of the *Enterprise*."

System requirements are surprisingly low: a Pentium 90 running Windows 95, a quad-speed CD ROM, and 16 megs of RAM. *Vulcan Fury* may turn out to be one of the hottest titles on adventure gamers' Christmas lists — and proof positive that Interplay's *Star Trek* line will continue to live long and prosper.

PCG

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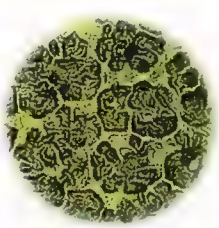

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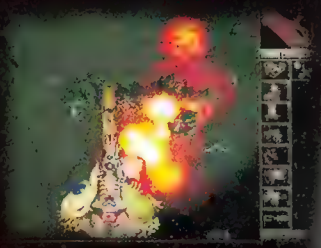

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TODAY, WE'D LIKE TO SHOW YOU HOW NICELY THEY'VE GROWN UP.

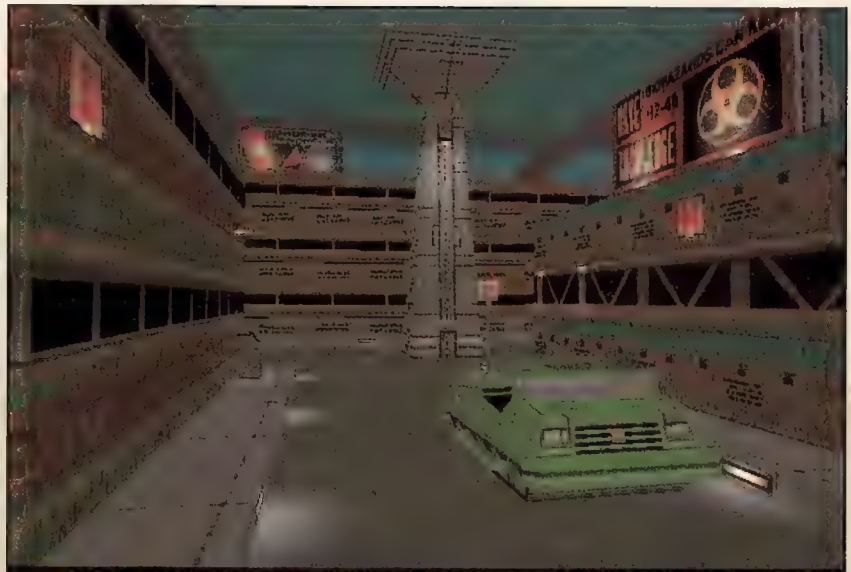
Product Information Number 321

Defiance

Action gaming with a twist!

An old wargame publisher leaves behind the tanks and trenches of traditional warfare to start a brand new game division and launch a hot new action title.

—T. Liam McDonald



In the power struggle for control of the galaxy, you are a soldier fighting for the Core to regain your homeland before it's destroyed.

FYI. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Defiance
Developer: Logicware
Publisher: Visceral Productions/Avalon Hill, 4517 Hartford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214 (401) 254-9200
Projected Price: N/A
Percentage Complete: 80%

In a nutshell:

Defiance puts you in the seat of a hovering assault vehicle as you battle the Premacy for control of the home system.

What's so special?

Part ***Descent***, part ***Quake***, ***Defiance*** brings some unique gameplay twists, a strong sense of narrative and purpose to the action realm, and the required Deathmatch maps for head-to-head play.

Why should I care?

Logicware has created a pretty sharp 3D engine that looks like it could stand toe-to-toe with ***Quake***, and the structure and flow of gameplay is more interesting than most shooters.

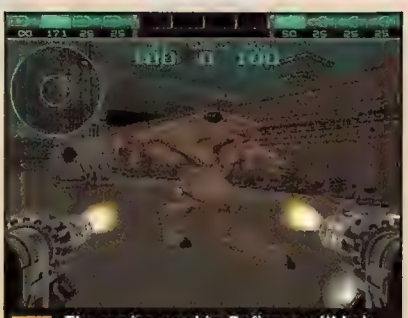
And when's it coming out?

October

Visceral Productions and Logicware are about to enter the crowded field of action games, seemingly from out of nowhere, with a title that might just surprise you with its strong gameplay.

Never heard of Visceral Productions? That's because its debut title, *Defiance*, doesn't ship until this fall. But behind Visceral is one of the premier wargame publishers in the world: Avalon Hill. Logicware, the developer, created *Sonic Extreme* and *Killing Time* and did console conversions of *Doom* and *Wolfenstein*.

"Avalon Hill is obviously best known for turn-based strategy games like *History of the World* and *Over the Reich*," says Vice-President of Research & Development Mark Hall. "*Defiance* is a major departure for us, hence the new division: Visceral Productions. We didn't want to confuse our loyal strategy gamers with an intense action game such as this. We understand that the action-simulation market is huge, but we don't want to simply market another *Doom* clone or *Descent*. *Defiance* is a very original game and concept."



The engine used in *Defiance* will help animations be fluid and smooth.

Defiance begins with a galaxy in the throes of war, as four different powers battle over the scattered remnants of a fading empire. As a soldier fighting for one of these powers — the Core — you are part of a struggle to regain the Home System before the Premacy can destroy it.

You begin your mission on the planet Calchona, test-flying a Low-altitude Assault Vehicle (the LAV-6). The LAV-6 is more unusual than the run-of-the-mill *Descent* ship. While it includes the familiar forward, back, rotate, and slide controls, it also adds altitude and

pitch. It doesn't "fly" all the time, but instead uses vertical thrusters with a finite amount of power, resulting in ground-level combat punctuated by four or five seconds of hover flight. The thrusters recharge fairly rapidly, but you have to plan how you're going to use them so they're ready when you need some fast lift.

"The thrusters require a certain amount of forethought to use," says Bill Levay, Director of Software Development at Avalon Hill, "and allow us to include many more interesting puzzle elements in each level. The pitch control allows a player to not only hit targets at variable altitudes, but also to view things above and below the LAV. It's especially useful when a player comes to the edge of a cliff, tunnel, or building."

Defiance will feature many different locations, including this subway.

The LAV is equipped with an interesting assortment of weapons: plasma bolt, chain gun, rail gun, spreader (the "BFG" of the game), as well as normal, cruise, homing, and swarm missiles, bounce bombs, electroshield, defense gunpods, and holographic decoys. All this comes in handy as it faces a wild assortment of "Biotype" biomechaical creatures every bit as sharp and dangerous as those in *Quake*.

But if *Defiance* was merely a late entry *Descent* clone or *Quake* knock-off, we probably wouldn't be covering it. The most prominent feature that makes it stand out from the pack is strong gameplay. The narrative element is strong and continues through the entire game, with cinematics and radio callouts punctuating each level. You ease into play with a training mode as your character tests out the LAV-6 for the first time, moving through a gauntlet, triggering deactivation screens to progress further, and then firing at stationary and moving targets. The training level ends with an assault on the testing facility, and the game proper begins.

The unique thing about *Defiance* is that it unfolds as a single real-time event. The player complete objectives in a level, then moves to the next level by way of first-person in-engine cut scenes. With the next level loading while the cutscenes are playing, the game is a continuous experience. Adding to this effect are the extensive voice-overs throughout each level, which are used to relay information to the player and further the storyline. It's like *Rebel Assault* with real gameplay.

The level themselves look interesting in the early beta stages: the ruins of futuristic cities, underground caverns full of flowing water, vast rocky terrains, military bases, terraforming stations, starports, sewers, huge canyons and caves. Cities are dressed up with fallen buildings, ships in harbor, signs, street lights, security systems, ruined tanks, and other detritus. All of it is polygon rendered.

As for level objectives and puzzles, Project Manager and Game Engine Designer Lars Brubaker says: "We are really trying to get away from the idea of the 'key hunt'. Instead, we use situations and events, rather than closed doors, to hinder the player's movement. In one level, the player needs to navigate through a mag-lev tunnel. But since the power is down, the train is stopped, blocking the player. The player needs to find the control room to restart the track's power and move the train. In another level, the player is blocked by a hive of evil beasts that have taken over a military base. To get by them, the player can battle up to the control room and switch on the automated defenses and watch as the auto-guns pulverize the creatures.

"Every level has dozens of these puzzle types," Lars says, "each one in keeping with the feel of the game, not just an annoying 'You need the Red Key' message. With our level-scripting engine, level designers can change almost any element of the game while designing their environment. We have provided dozens of puzzle pieces: small building blocks that we can use to create almost anything. Of course, we also have translucent polygons, animated sliding textures, animated polygon objects, and dynamic level destruction, to keep on the cutting edge."

The engine looks pretty darn good so far, even in low-res. Objects, creatures, missiles, and gunshots are fully 3D modeled in Lightwave, animated in 3D Studio Max, and textured in the *Defiance* editor. Explosions and fire effects are "2D animations played with a custom alpha channel on an animated polygon," Lars says. "This gives the artist the ability to make truly amazing explosions in a rendering package, yet you see none of the black overdrawing that usually comes with rendering fire in a 3D game. Fire and explosions are also translucent with a bright bias, meaning the brighter the pixel, the more opaque it is rendered in the engine."

The moving 3D objects render quite smoothly, due to an engine that fills in the frames that aren't rendered (called "polygon object tweening"). "In *Quake*, the objects have a set number of animation frames," Lars says. "As they move around, you can see each distinct frame of the animation, making the monsters appear to jerk from one frame to the next. Our engine automatically smooths out the animation, filling in the frames in-between and creating a smooth motion over the entire animation. In essence, we can alter the speed of our creature's animations, making them as fast or as slow as we want, with the creature having a fluid, non-jerky motion."

PCG

Lightwave and 3D Studio Max were used to create the brillant *Defiance* graphics.

Taking out the game's biomedical creatures should be easy with a little help from your weapons — a plasma bolt, chain and rail guns, missles, bombs, an electroshield, and more.

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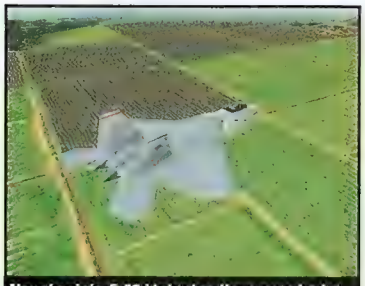
F-22: Raptors at War

Flight sims dodge a bullet

For years, game companies making detailed flight sims of military aircraft have relied on the manufacturers of those aircraft to provide them with information and images to help them create their games.



NovaLogic's *F-22 Lightning II* prompted a letter from Lockheed Martin over trademarks.

Were that to change — if companies like Lockheed Martin could suddenly start charging for their information, or even work out exclusive deals for the likenesses of their aircraft — the entire flight sim industry would be radically changed.

It almost happened.

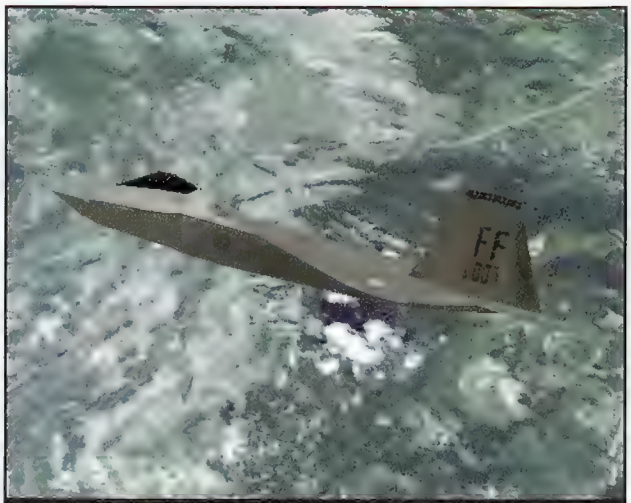
Back in May, we learned that Lockheed Martin (the makers of the F-22 Raptor aircraft) and sim-maker NovaLogic were negotiating for the exclusive rights to the F-22 Raptor, its name, its images, and its photographs for NovaLogic's upcoming simulation, *F-22 Raptor*.

The first to learn of this negotiation was Interactive Magic chairman "Wild Bill" Stealey, when he received a letter from Lockheed Martin informing his company of this, and told him to "cease and desist" from using the name and likeness of the F-22. He immediately took steps to bring this issue out on the Internet and to the attention of gamers everywhere.

Lockheed unveiled the real F-22 Raptor at a ceremony earlier this year.

What Stealey recognized was that if aircraft makers like Lockheed could start licensing their products to flight sim makers, development costs would increase significantly, and gamers would have far fewer choices in the flight sim market.

Interactive Magic posted a good deal of information on its web site and created an online forum to let gamers debate the issue. It took a strong stand against any attempts by gaming companies to secure the rights to taxpayer-funded aircraft. The industry group IDSA backed Stealey, as did rival sim-maker Digital Image Design. Online magazines, including *PC Gamer*, began to cover the story, and soon the Internet news groups were filled with heated discussion about this issue.



Interactive Magic's *iF-22 Raptor* flight sim was in danger of being permanently grounded because of license talks between NovaLogic and Lockheed Martin.

For its part, NovaLogic maintains that it was responding to Lockheed's overtures, and by talking with them, only exercised good business sense: if Lockheed Martin was suddenly changing the rules, then NovaLogic was ready to adapt. NovaLogic's only complaint against I-Magic, voiced in a second "cease and desist" letter, was a separate issue: I-Magic's game, *iF-22 Raptor*, had a name too similar to Nova-

Continued on page 64:
See F-22

The Players ...

LOCKHEED MARTIN

A huge defense company; its Skunk Works division initiated the controversy by sending a cease-and-desist letter to NovaLogic regarding the F-22 trademarks. It then began to negotiate with NovaLogic for those same rights. Lockheed's headquarters thought better of the idea, and came out against exclusivity in a meeting in early June.

INTERACTIVE MAGIC

Headed by "Wild Bill" Stealey, this North Carolina game-maker vigorously lobbied against any exclusivity agreements, both on the Internet and behind the scenes. Its own *iF-22 Raptor* game was nearing completion when this controversy broke, so it was the most affected, but it looks like the company's position ultimately prevailed.

NOVALOGIC

A California company, it has already released an F-22 game: *F-22 Lightning II*. Singled out as the "bad guy" by many during this dispute, NovaLogic president John Garcia maintains that his company was only reacting in a reasonable manner to actions initiated by Lockheed Martin.

DIGITAL IMAGE DESIGN

A British developer working on an F-22 game of its own (as is Mission Studios), DID came out publicly in support of Interactive Magic, and called for a meeting with all parties to resolve the issue.

APOGEE

Unexpectedly caught in the middle in the fight over the 'Raptor' name, because of a 1994 arcade game it released, *Raptor*.

U.S. AIR FORCE

The only customer for the real F-22s, the Air Force and Lockheed Martin are currently engaged in a vigorous campaign to persuade the government to let them buy more. The Air Force says that no deal can be made regarding the information and images of taxpayer-funded aircraft, but they are not involved in specific trademark issues regarding the name 'Raptor' in computer gaming.

Growth of a Giant

Electronic Arts buys Maxis

Electronic Arts and Maxis have signed an agreement to merge. EA will buy out Maxis for $125 million in stock, making Maxis a wholly-owned subsidiary of EA, similar in that respect to Bullfrog and Origin. The merger is expected to be completed by the end of August, though it is still subject to stockholder approval.

At least one shareholder is in favor of the merger: Maxis co-founder and chairman Jeff Braun, who owns 28 percent of the outstanding shares, has agreed to vote for the merger. "This is an outstanding business combination," Braun says. "Partnering with EA will open new retail opportunities and provide additional financial resources to continue to create groundbreaking software." Will Wright, the other co-founder of Maxis, is also supporting the transaction.

Maxis will now be a subsidiary of EA.

Similar sentiments were echoed by EA chairman and CEO Larry Probst. "Maxis' talented team has created a highly-successful franchise for its Sim family of products," said Probst. "Its flagship title, *SimCity*, is one of the most valuable franchises in our industry."

Maxis' CEO, Sam Poole, offered some insight on why the merger took place. "For the last 18-24 months, we've seen a tremendous proliferation of products in the market," said Poole. "There's been, on average, a 40 percent increase on the number of products for the last three to four years now. We started seeing pricing erosion and more and more retail outlets started carrying software. So we started seeing that even the best products, because of all those other products competing for the consumer dollar, may not have achieved the sales they may have in the past."

Because of the changing nature of the marketplace, it became apparent to Poole and others at Maxis that in order for their titles to get as much exposure as possible, it was necessary to align with one of the major players. "We saw this as a real opportunity to hook up and make a strong company even more powerful," says Poole.

Continued on page 64:
***See* Growth**

MORE FROM MAXIS

CHROMAFORM

A unique combination of creature creation and bloodthirsty combat comes to life in *Chromaform*, an interesting blend of *SimLife* and *C&C*. There are more than 45 different abilities to assign to your creatures, covering different forms of attack (bludgeoning, biting, and piercing), movement (rolling, walking, and leaping) as well as defenses and special abilities. Different kinds of creatures can be combined to form larger structures such as bridges or walls, so victory will depend not on pumping out the most creatures, but building teams with the best combination of abilities to win the battle.

CRUCIBLE

Diablo fans take note: *Crucible* is a new 3/4 view fantasy action game with eight different character classes, 24 different types of monsters, and 60 different levels set in six different worlds, offering enough variety to challenge even the most dungeon-weary sword-swinger. The different character classes include such diverse offerings as a Dragon Knight, Lizard Man, and Winged Sorceress. And for added novelty and fun, players in multi-player games will have the opportunity to take on the role of the monsters.

Look for it at the end of the year.

You'll be able to zoom in and out on the streets of *SimCity 3000*.

SimCity 3000 in the Works

Even in the midst of the confusion of a merger, work continues on the third installment in the classic SimCity series. *SimCity 3000* is a whole generation ahead of previous offerings, bringing the player right down to the level of individual streets in the cities they create.

Your goal, however, is still the same — to grow a tiny town to a thriving metropolis, warding off crime, pollution, and natural disasters while balancing the budget. It is this juggling act that has made the SimCity games so popular and so unique.

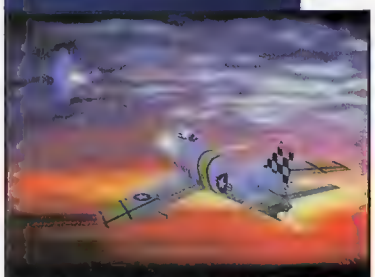
SC 3000's new super zoom feature allows you to watch pedestrian activity, traffic, and crime right at street level (as seen in the early screen shot, above), or zoom out for a more traditional overhead view . There are hundreds of new building types to choose from, including gas stations, fast food restaurants, farms, and coffee houses (for those of you in Seattle).

A new 3D audio surround soundtrack provides ambient city noise as you explore your city from the first-person point of view, and Maxis is planning to support the game with future add-ons by including a modular plug-in format that will allow new building types, disasters, and scenarios to be downloaded and easily included in the game.

SC 3000 will require Windows 95, a Pentium 90, and 16MB of RAM. A 3D card is recommended. Look for it toward the end of the year.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

The military sim community may have been waiting with bated breath for the results of the F-22 dispute, but that didn't stop them from continuing work on a whole range of new military simulations. From genre veterans like Interactive Magic to relative newcomers like Virgin and Zombie, a whole slew of tanks, planes, and jets are driving and flying there way from the game houses to PCs everywhere.


Virgin Interactive takes to the skies in *Saber Ace*, its first flight sim.

Sabre Ace

With *Saber Ace: Conflict Over Korea*, Virgin Interactive is venturing for the first time into the world of air combat sims. The game depicts historically accurate combat missions with five different Korean War aircraft for players to fly: the MiG-15, the P-51 Mustang, F-80 Shooting Star, and F-86 Saber. There are 45 different single-player missions based on actual events from the Korean War, with 25 different kinds of aircraft in the theater, up to 14 of them in the air at one time. The game is being developed by Eagle Interactive and should be ready in September.

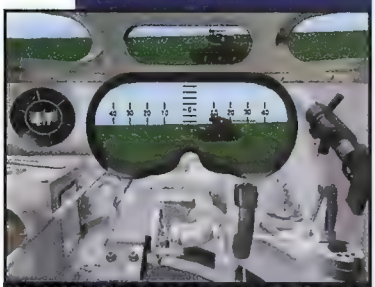
iPanzer '44

Interactive Magic and the designers of *iM1A2 Abrams* are creating a new tank game, this time taking place during the furious tank battles of World War Two. *iPanzer '44* sports a brand new terrain engine and will allow players to control American, Russian, or German tanks. Head-to-head play is well-supported, with two player

Continued on page 56

Continued from page 55

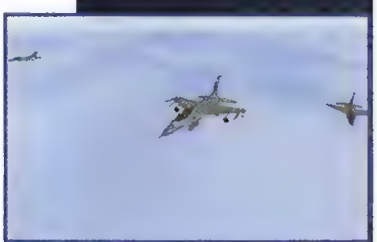
modem play and up to eight players slugging it out across a network. *iPanzer '44* will be ready this winter.



World War Two tanks go to war in *iPanzer '44*, from Interactive Magic.

iF-16 Viper

Also new from Interactive Magic is *iF-16 Viper*, being developed by the same team that created the award-winning helicopter sims, *Apache* and *Hind*. The game contains missions in Korea, Israel, and Cyprus, and has been enhanced to let novice players get into the game quickly while still maintaining the high degree of complexity and realism that veteran players demand. Terrain graphics have been enhanced and multi-player options include both head-to-head play on the modem and 16 player LAN play. Look for it this winter.



Interactive Magic's *iF-16 Viper* takes flight this winter.

Spearhead

Zombie and MAK Technologies are teaming up to create *Spearhead*, a new high-end military simulation based on the U.S. Army's M1A2 Abrams main battle tank. The game will support the 3Dfx chipset, features free, out-of-the-box Internet play, and makes use of photo-realistic textures drawn from the actual

Continued on page 59

Sid Meier's Gettysburg!

Firaxis attacks the Civil War

Take one of the industry's top game designers, have him tackle the ever-popular real-time strategy genre, then mix in the tactics and history of a Civil War wargame, and you just might have the formula for strategy game of the year. That's the battle plan at Firaxis, where *Sid Meier's Gettysburg!* has been under development since last fall.

Sid Meier should need no introduction, as his work from *Silent Service* and *Pirates!* to *Railroad Tycoon* and *Civilization* has won countless awards. So when we heard he was doing a real-time Civil War game, we eagerly sought him out to find out more about this work in progress.

Meier resists comparing his new game to a *WarCraft II* or a *Red Alert*, despite the common element of real-time combat. "It's kind of artificial to combine everything that's real-time and call it a genre," Meier says. "It's only been over the last year or two that I've heard that term, and we've been doing real-time games for ten years. The way this one came about, we didn't set out to make a 'real-time strategy game'; we looked at the Battle of Gettysburg and tried to decide what would be the most interesting, the most realistic, and the most fun way to bring this to life. I think that is clearly the real-time approach."

But a real-time approach to a Civil War battle breaks with wargaming convention, a genre largely dominated by turn-based games. We asked Meier why he thought that most wargames are turn-based. "It's very, very hard to write a real-time game that is also realistic, because real-time introduces a whole bunch of new problems as far as control, confusion, timing, and pacing go," says Meier. "The whole reason for turn-based is to solve those problems.

"That's really what I've been playing around with for quite a few years — trying to get a real-time approach to the Civil War that is also manageable, understandable, clear, and fun to play. I think the more tactical you get, the closer you get to the battlefield, and the more you're dealing with smaller units and smaller periods of time, the more real-time makes sense." To Meier, a real-time game covering World War Two in its entirety is impractical, but on the scale of Gettysburg, a battlefield five miles by five miles, real-time makes sense.

It is also a scale that permits the recreation of memorable incidents. "When I look at the Battle of Gettysburg, I think of specific things that were exciting, like the defense of Little Round Top, Pickett's Charge, or the Iron Brigade on the first day. The battle almost defines its own scale, and you want to be able to take part in those key moments. The game is at a scale that lets you defend Little Round Top and command Pickett's Charge. It lets you participate in the key moments."

Firaxis' Sid Meier attacks the battle of Gettysburg.

> "The game is at a scale that lets you defend Little Round Top and command Pickett's charge. It lets you participate in key moments."
> — Sid Meier

But the player is not doomed to repeat history, Meier indicates. "We set you up in the initial historic situation," he says, "but once the game starts, you can take it off in any direction. You're certainly not limited to duplicating the original."

The game has two modes — a historical version in which the order of battle is drawn from the actual events, and a more unpredictable mode, in which the same units are involved on both sides, but the time and order in which they arrive and the location in which they start are different.

The game itself, in single-player mode, is not one gigantic battle, played over and over, but rather a series of linked scenarios that allow you to participate in key events, such as Pickett's Charge. A number of scenarios drawn from the battle itself will give the game much more replayability than playing out one large battle.

But the units themselves won't be randomized, as they are part of what makes Gettysburg so special as a battle. "We want the generals and the units to be the way they were historically," Meier says. "We can do a lot in terms in variability of when they arrive and where they arrive, but we don't change the composition.

"One of the reasons I think the Civil War is so fascinating is that the people involved are very easy to identify with. For one, they were Americans, but they were also very literate — they wrote letters and books about the war and how they felt about being in a battle."

But one of the most intriguing aspects of this new product is its multi-player mode. The game will support up to two-player modem games and up to eight players on the Internet and local area networks. These multi-player games will be in team mode, whether cooperative against the AI or in two teams with up to four players aside. This has many gamers excited, as this is possibly the first ever multi-player, team vs. team, real-time wargame in the works.

"The multi-player is great fun, we've been playing it for two months now," Meier says. "It's like being a general in the battle. There is no other game that really gives you that sense. You're not in an invented situation, this is real history and you're taking part in it."

Rodrigo

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High on a Half Life

Sierra will use *Quake* engine

Half Life is the latest game to make use of id's awesome *Quake* engine.

The hottest property in computer games right now is id Software's *Quake* engine. Licensing deals for the technology have already been announced with 3D Realms, Hipnotic, ION Storm, and a couple of others are in the works — but now Sierra joins the party with a *Quake* game of its own: *Half Life*.

The game is being developed by newcomer Valve and boasts a number of new features, including 16-bit color, dynamic textures, colored lighting, translucency, and metal surfaces. The designers also intend to add more story and exploration elements than is standard for the genre, with players being challenged to sort friend from foe in the complex game world. Up to 32 players will be able to play on the Internet, and support for Direct 3D, OpenGL, and MMX is planned.

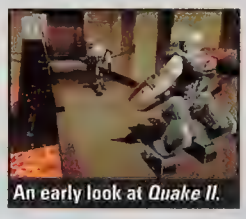
It's balls-to-the-wall action in Activision's *Half Life*.

Activision Signs Quake II

Id Software's next game, *Quake II*, will be distributed by Activision, which won out a bidding war for the rights to this hotly-anticipated title. When Activision secured the sequel, some were surprised, because much of id's previous work had been published by GT Interactive. We spoke with id Software CEO Todd Hollenshead about his company's choice of publisher.

"Signing with a distributor is a complex equation, and I don't believe that the highest bidder necessarily wins," says Hollenshead.

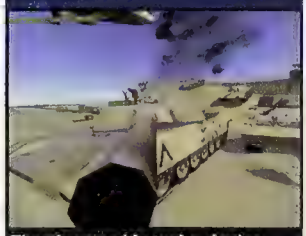
"After careful consideration, we decided that Activision offered id Software the best total package, taking into account financial and other considerations. It's a great deal for Activision as well, because they're getting a guaranteed mega-hit, which allows them to really get behind the title from the start."



An early look at *Quake II*.

Continued from page 56

hardware. If that's not enough, consider that the developers are using the US military's SIMNET networking technology for multi-player action and are working to create as authentic a military simulation as possible. The game is set to be published by BMG Interactive and should be ready by this holiday season.



Them's some big tanks, Junior. *Spearhead* is a new M1A2 tank simulation.

G-Police

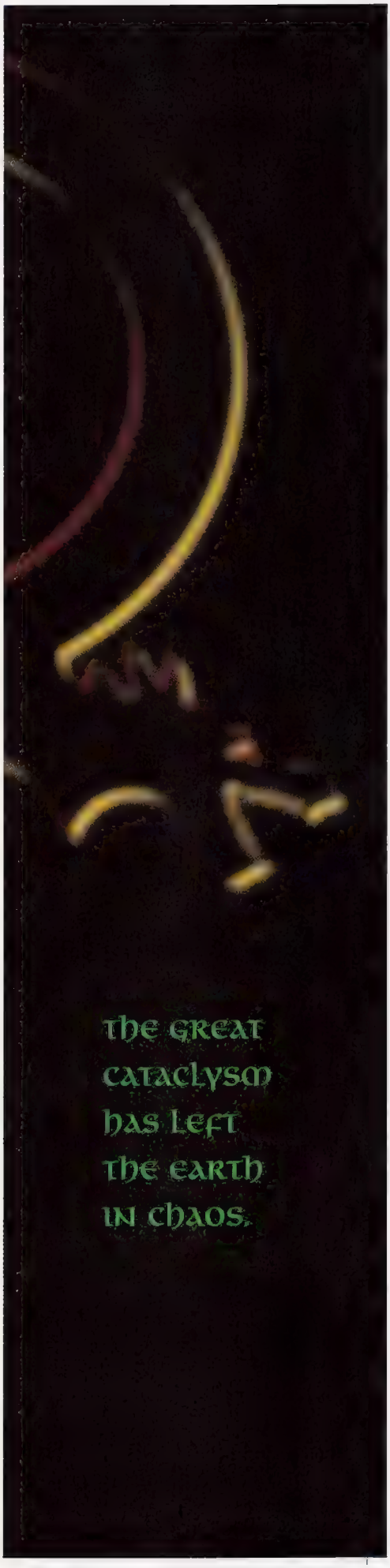
The *G-Police* aren't going to give you tickets for G-Walking — rather they're the crew of a highly-advanced police aircraft, the Havoc. A highly maneuverable, vector thrust gunship, the Havoc is the perfect tool for urban law enforcement in the overcrowded cities of the moons of Jupiter. The in-game graphics on this title are nothing short of spectacular, with colored lighting and transparencies running at a rapid clip. We'll be bringing you more on this high-profile action title from Psygnosis in the near future, so stay tuned.

The *G-Police* on the move in this futuristic action game from Psygnosis.

Resident Evil

One of the best-selling PlayStation titles of all time, *Resident Evil*, is coming to the PC, courtesy of Virgin Interactive Entertainment. The console version sold more than two million copies,

Continued on page 61



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Product Information Number 181

Murder Most Foul

Take 2 unveils *Black Dahlia*

It's been a busy year for Take 2 Interactive, as the company acquired sim developer Mission Studios in late '96 and then went public earlier this year.

Now they're back, picking up where they left off with *Ripper* in *Black Dahlia*, a new adventure game combing full-motion video and the hunt for a serial killer.

But where *Ripper* was set in a cyberpunk future, *Black Dahlia* takes place in the 1940s, and the setting and atmosphere are appropriately rich.

Inspired by an actual murder case that was never solved, the player enters a dark underworld of wartime espionage, occult intrigue, and gruesome serial killings, as they try to crack the case.

The *Ripper* engine has been advanced, and now integrates full-motion video characters into hand-drawn backgrounds.

Additional touches, such as letting you explore basements and other dark areas with a moving flashlight or candle add a suitable ambiance and help draw the player more deeply into the game world.

Jim Pearson investigates the crime in *Black Dahlia*.

The Birth of Red Orb

New direction for old company

Broderbund Software is one of the oldest computer game publishers around, though it's recently spun off its games division as a separate label, Red Orb Entertainment.

The new label will launch seven games this year, including *Riven*, the sequel to *Myst* (see the February 97 Eyewitness section) and *Warlords III* (see our Scoop in the May 97 issue). Joining these games are *The Journeyman Project 3* and *Take No Prisoners*. They will also be launching the Red Orb Zone, a free Internet matchmaking service for gamers.

The third Journeyman Project game picks up where the last one left off, with Agent #5 Gage Blackwood investigating time disturbances and trying to track down his nemesis from *The Journeyman Project 2*, the renegade Agent #3. Look for it in early 1998.

Shifting from adventure to action, *Take No Prisoners* is a third-person combat game created by Raven. The game has an unusual top-down perspective; other key features of the game include multiple outcomes, co-op play, and support for 3D cards.

Jetfighter Full Burn

Jetfighter III was a well-received flight sim, and its creator, Mission Studios, is working on a new product, *Jetfighter Full Burn*, for November. This new game will use the *Jetfighter III* engine, but there's a lot more gameplay being included, with five million square miles of terrain and 70 new missions to enjoy. The new campaign takes place over the skies of Scandinavia.

Continued from page 59

making it one of the best-selling games ever, and Virgin hopes to have similar success on the PC side. The game has a horror theme, challenging players to explore a haunted mansion by solving puzzles and engaging in combat with giant spiders, mutant dogs, and other monsters while searching for their lost companions. The game's been beefed up technologically, and will support 3D accelerators such as the Rendition, 3Dfx, and Power VR card.

Brave adventurers explore the ominous halls of *Resident Evil* in this PlayStation port.

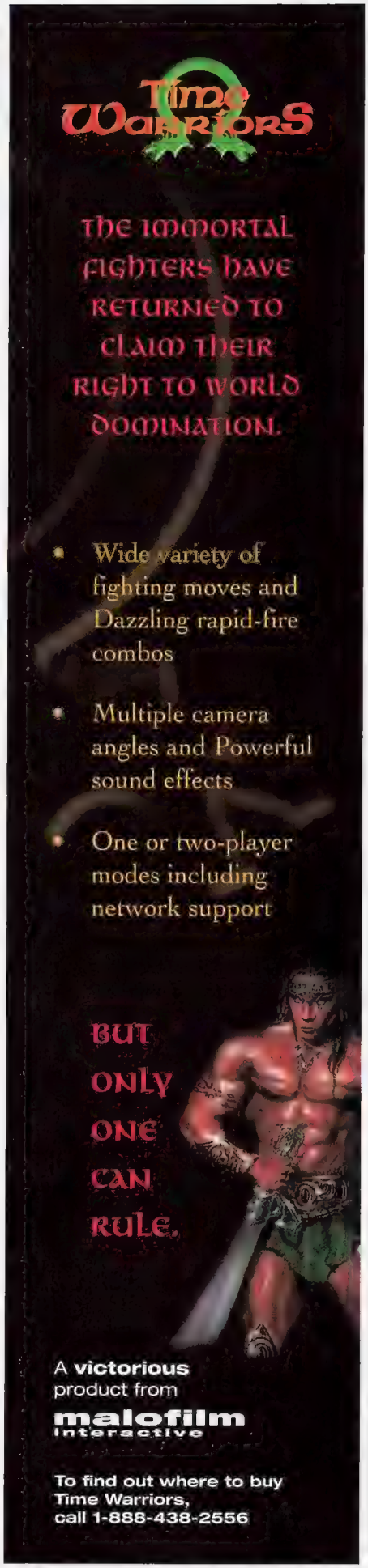
M.A.X. 2

Interplay has announced *M.A.X. 2*, a sequel to its award-winning science fiction strategy game. The sequel has been enhanced with several new features, including a new parallax scrolling technology. Parallax scrolling scales units on 3D terrain so that the units on higher elevations are slightly larger, creating a more realistic effect. The sequel will also have three different gameplay modes: traditional turn-based mode, simultaneous turn-based mode, and a new real-time strategy option. *M.A.X. 2* will also be eminently customizable, with every unit and structure open to modification. It's slated for a November release.

The Dark Half

THQ and Orion Interactive have teamed up to create *The Dark Half*, a new horror game based on the Stephen King novel of the same name. Being developed by Bits Studio in the UK, the game is planned as a third-person perspective adventure with richly detailed environments to explore. As in the book, the plot concerns writer Thad Beaumont's attempts

Continued on page 63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Product Information Number 102

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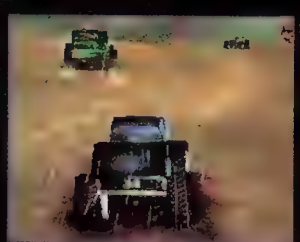

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Product Information Number 270

Turn On the HEAT

SegaSoft launches new game network

Joining the burgeoning world of online gaming services is SegaSoft's HEAT network. Built in part with technology licensed from Mplayer and with a similar pricing plan, HEAT brings to the table new games, customized home pages, and an aggressive attitude.

HEAT will offer a number of games to its users, some of which, like *Blood*, will be familiar to gamers, while others, like *10six*, *Scud Industrial Evolution*, and *Net Fighter*, have been custom-built for the network. Besides these custom games and HEAT-enabled titles, the network will also support any game that has IPX play built into it. By using SegaSoft's rIPX technology, which is an IPX-spoofer like Kali, HEAT tricks the game into thinking it is playing on an IPX network, not the Internet. Using this technique, HEAT will support hundreds of existing multi-player games quickly, and can carry games like *Duke Nukem 3D* and *WarCraft II*—which are supposed to be exclusive to other networks.

Beyond the games, HEAT offers a variety of features not yet found on other networks. Each user has their own mini-home page, which lists their favorite games. The Page n' Play feature allows users to page each other and then jump right into their favorite game.

An additional incentive to use HEAT is something called "degrees," which are points you can earn for winning tournaments and similar contests. With enough degrees, you can get discounts on software you purchase in the online store. Gamers are even encouraged to wager their degrees in deathmatches with each other, and the HEAT-enabled games will track game stats and award the points to the winner.

To play on HEAT, you must have Windows 95, and a Java and Shockwave-enabled web browser. Some areas of HEAT will be free, while other areas require a pricing plan somewhere in the neighborhood of $50 a year.

The disposable assassin on HEAT.

WarSport from TimeSink will be a completely free Internet game supported by advertising.

Giving It Away

Internet game developer TimeSink has an interesting pricing plan: all its games will be free. This start-up company was founded by Martin Schoffstall, a 15-year Internet veteran who's founded several companies, most notably PSINet.

Schoffstall believes the time is finally right for Internet gaming, and that the price of admission should be, like television and radio, free, the costs paid for by advertising. Accordingly, TimeSink will design its games to include advertising, similar to the very successful *You Don't Know Jack Netshow*.

The first game, *WarSport*, already in beta-testing on Mplayer, is a combat sports game with eight players and 50 robots on a side. It will officially launch on December 1st at *www.warsport.com*.

Microsoft Debuts New Rival for Ultima Online

The realm of online roleplaying games has just gained another player: Microsoft is readying *Empyrean*, a new RPG, for release on the Internet Gaming Zone later this year.

The game has a first-person point of view, making it look more like *Meridian 59* than *Ultima Online* and its 3/4 perspective. It is set entirely on one island, with characters free to move anywhere across it, making it a very open-ended experience. Allegiances and guilds will be important factors in determining what players will wish to do. Designed from the ground up as an Internet RPG, the game is readily scaleable, allowing new buildings, objects, and quests to be added to the game world with a quick download.

Empyrean abandons the usual character class options found in many roleplaying games. Instead, players begin as peasants, and build up their character by learning new skills and gaining new abilities. This structure makes character development much more open-ended, and allows players to custom-tailor their character to suit their own interests.

Empyrean is being developed by Turbine Entertainment Software, a Massachusetts company. This is its first game, and will launch this winter.

Bill Gates heads into the dungeon in Microsoft's new online roleplaying game, *Empyrean*.

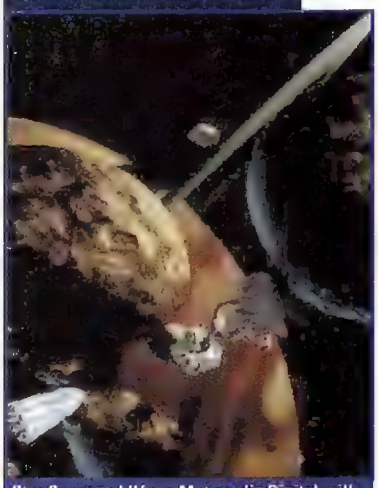
Continued from page 61

to come to grips with his murderous alter-ego, George Stark.

Star Command II: Armada

Metropolis Digital is at work on a sequel to *Star Command*, its science fiction strategy game. The sequel, however, will not be a real-time strategy game as was the original, but rather an online science fiction roleplaying game, set in a persistent world and played on dedicated online servers.

The game's graphics are also being enhanced with new SVGA modes, and real-time lighting, shadows, and special effects are being incorporated into the design.


Star Command II from Metropolis Digital will be an online science fiction RPG.

Dawn of War

We've lost count of how many real-time strategy games are being developed: the most recently announced is *Dawn of War*, being created by Illusion Reality and set to be published by Virgin Interactive.

Illusion Reality is an Austin, TX, studio founded by Stephen and Ellen Beeman, part of the creative team behind *Wing Commander II*.

But now that Westwood Studios' Brett Sperry is overseeing product development for Virgin, any team working on a real-time strategy game should produce good work. Sperry oversaw the birth of the genre with *Dune II* and *Command & Conquer* at Westwood Studios.

PCG

News Briefs

Deep Blue Beats Kasparov

IBM's supercomputer Deep Blue won a six game chess match against Russian Grandmaster Garry Kasparov, becoming the first computer ever to defeat a world champion under tournament conditions. The final game lasted less than an hour, with Kasparov resigning after only 19 moves.

Acclaim Embarrassed by Albert Deal

The ink was still wet on the contract when the bad news rolled in. Acclaim had just signed sports broadcaster Marv Albert to do the voiceover for its football game, *Quarterback Club 98*, when it was learned that the commentator has been indicted on charges of sexual assault by Arlington, VA, police. As of press time, Acclaim was still planning to use Albert for their game.

TEN Licenses MAK Technology

The Total Entertainment Network has formed a partnership with military sim creator MAK Technologies to co-develop a new online space exploration and combat game based on MAK's proprietary military networking technology. This new title will be exclusive to TEN, and will support up to 100 players at a time in its persistent environment. This might later expand to a 1,000 players at a time. For more info on MAK, check out the story on page 61 of the July 97 *PC Gamer*.

Big Players For PC/TV Gaming

Microsoft and Electronic Arts are putting their weight behind a new proposed cable TV/computer gaming trial being put together by ICTV. Both companies are allowing some of their game titles to be used in a limited trial run of the system being conducted in Santa Barbara, CA. The ICTV technology connects cable television systems to the Internet at speeds of up to 10Mbps, which is considerably higher than 28.8Kbps modems.

7th Legion for Spectrum

Spectrum Holobyte has picked up Epic MegaGame's real-time strategy game, *7th Legion*, for publication. The game will come out under Spectrum's MicroProse strategy games label. Epic has a strategy of seeking multiple publishers, and this is the third publisher they have signed with over the last year.

The PC Gamer Playlist

What's hot at the magazine's offices this month.

In the course of putting this issue together we got to spend a lot of time with the lovely Lara Croft, and as we worked on our cover story, the young English heiress dropped by our offices on more than one occasion to discuss her career and her upcoming work. But as we got to know her better, Lara began to open up, and we found out more about her personal life, her likes, and dislikes. But she does seem to have a bit of a one-track mind.

FAVORITE GAME: *Tomb Raider*

FAVORITE GAME SHE DOESN'T APPEAR IN: *Pitfall*

FAVORITE MOVIE: *Raiders of the Lost Ark*

FAVORITE FICTIONAL CHARACTER: *Indiana Jones*

LAST VACATION: *Ancient ruins in Mexico*

FAVORITE PASTTIME: *Exploring ancient ruins*

1.	*X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*	Jason, Todd
2.	*Shadow Warrior*	Joel, Jason
3.	*You Don't Know Jack Movies*	Gary, Quintin
4.	*Strike-a-Match (www.gameshows.com)*	Joe, Lisa
5.	*MDK*	Todd, Dan
6.	*Shadows Over Riva*	Mike
7.	*Heroes of Might and Magic II (expansion)*	Joe
8.	*FPS: Golf*	Dean
9.	*Star Trek: Generations*	Dan, Todd
10.	*Tomb Raider*	Lara, CM

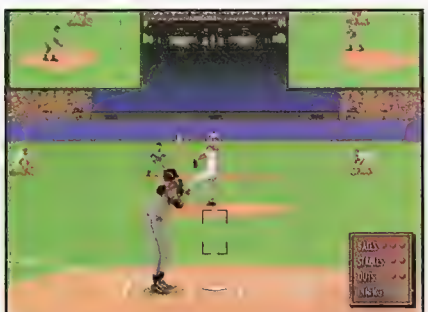
Growth

Continued from page 55

"Larry Probst has stated that he wants to be the number one PC entertainment publisher in the world, and we think Maxis can play a key role in that."

The two companies have some overlap in their product lines, most notably with EA's *Triple Play 98* and Maxis' *Tony La Russa Baseball 4*. "But they address different markets," says Poole. "*Triple Play* is aimed at a much younger audience, it's very arcade/action-oriented, whereas *Tony La Russa* has an older audience, a very loyal audience. And actually EA distributed all three previous versions of *Tony La Russa*. You can release more than one action game, so I'm sure you can release more than one baseball game."

There will be some overlapping positions at the two companies and some layoffs are inevitable, but overall Poole is very upbeat about Maxis' prospects. He notes that Origin has grown from less than a hundred employees at the time of its acquisition by EA to several hundred employees today.



Maxis' *Tony La Russa Baseball 4* and Electronic Arts' *Triple Play 98* address diferrent markets.

F-22

Continued from page 54

Logic's trademarked *F-22 Raptor*.

That specific dispute — the similarity of the game names — is a secondary issue to the larger issue of exclusive rights to "images and information," but one with an interesting wrinkle all its own. Apogee Software, which does *not* make flight sims, released a game called *Raptor* several years ago, and any other computer game incorporating the word 'Raptor' would likely be infringing on its trademark. I-Magic declined to pay for the name, and changed the name of its game to *iF-22*.

The dispute over the rights to the F-22 ultimately reached even the mainstream press, with newspapers and even CNN covering the debate, but ultimately the issue was decided by Lockheed. At a closed-doors meeting, the powers-that-be decided that dealing for exclusive rights was impractical, angering as it did game companies, game buyers, and even the U.S. Air Force, who came out publicly in support of I-Magic's position. Lockheed might license its Skunk Works logo and its unique F-22 insignia, but that would be the extent of any licensing agreements, and even a deal like that would not be exclusive.

Since Lockheed is currently lobbying the U.S. government to buy more real F-22s for huge sums of money, it seems that it realized that the minuscule amount of income to be made from exclusive computer game licenses was far outweighed by the goodwill generated for their aircraft by the computer gaming industry.

And, after all, taxpayer-funded aircraft belong to the taxpayers, and gamers and game companies are taxpayers too.

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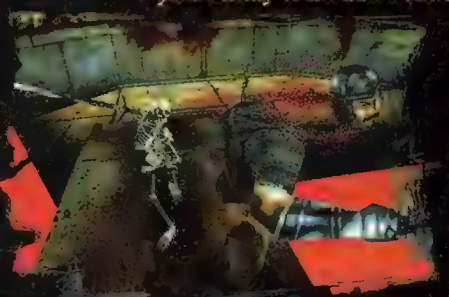

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Elements: New

[Centauri Galaxy]

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Ex Extinction .0140	**Su** Suffocation .002					
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M Morale .171	**Fi** Fire .139	**Me** Meteor .52	**Vc** Volcano .905	**Wr** Wreckage .408	**Cnf** Confrontation .002	**Ms** Missions .0849

Element of Surprise Element of Danger Element of Destruction Element of Disaster

Dynamix

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Cn Colonists .03	Rt Real-time .011	A Action 0.800	Cp^{n} Competition .302	Ds Disaster .0408	Pn Panic .105	Tf Terraforming .0403
M Magma .312	Me Microbe .119	Ps Psychosis .9054	F^{u}s Fusion .5005	D Danger .0054	Cg Courage .0202	Va^{3} Vacuum of space .290
Hg Hunger .03	Mi Mining .091	Di Discovery .081	Rs Research .032	Dn Desperation .217	Bc Balance .1003	Dn Day and Night .055
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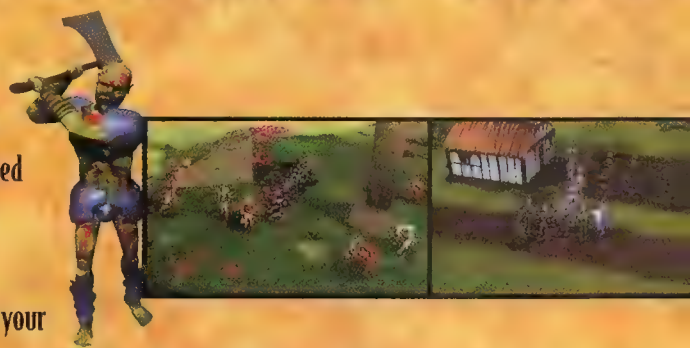

Now you can go hand-to-hand with the enemy on a smoothly rolling 3D landscape the way you've always imagined. The environment of Myth: The Fallen Lords is so real that every bloody limb, every scattered sword, every unexploded charge tossed by a ground-rippling explosion remains a live element ready to be seized and used by or against you. Not limited to a simple overhead view, you'll rotate around the heads of your troops, follow the arc of a burning arrow and zoom in on the slaughter.

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myth
THE FALLEN LORDS

Product Information Number 104

In this gorgeous rendered scene, Lara Croft shows off one of her new outfits and one of the spooky new environments she'll explore in *Tomb Raider 2*. In a level set almost entirely underwater, Lara will don a wetsuit, travel to the sea bed in a mini-sub, and search the sunken wreck of a huge passenger liner modeled on the Titanic.

LARA CROFT exploded onto the PC late last year as the star of Core Design's awesome **TOMB RAIDER**, and now reigns supreme as the undisputed queen of action gaming. More than two million sales and countless awards later, **SHE'S BACK** in a sequel that should surprise anybody who thinks they know what to expect. **Gary Whitta** met the makers of the PC's most enigmatic gaming icon.

If Looks could Kill...

The world of computer gaming is built on stereotypes. In a business where most gaming genres are as clichéd as the characters who star in them, it's rare to see something that genuinely rocks the boat. Perhaps that's why *Tomb Raider* caused such a stir when it arrived at the end of last year. Just when it seemed certain that most of the Action Game awards for 1996 would be shared by *Quake* and *Duke Nukem 3D* — two games based in stereotypical genres and featuring almost ridiculous stereotypical muscle-bound heroes — the British developer Core Design came along and blew them both out of the water with a style of gameplay we hadn't seen in years, and a central character the like of which we'd never seen before.

Tomb Raider shook up everybody's tired perceptions of what a 3D action game could be, and the kind of hero we should expect to play. Where other 3D action games have offered little more than blasting, blasting, and, er, more blasting, *Tomb Raider* combined exploration, puzzle-solving, and death-defying platform jumping in a style not seen since Broderbund's 2D classic *Prince of Persia*. But more immediately noticeable was the hero in the midst of it all — not the usual off-the-shelf muscular Arnie-a-like, or whip-cracking Indiana Jones clone, but a tough-as-nails female spelunker by the name of Lara Croft. Smart, fearless, resourceful, and almost impossibly agile — not to mention drop-dead gorgeous — Lara made her way through the perilous, baddy-infested temples of ancient civilizations with a unique repertoire of gymnastic flips, daring leaps across yawning chasms, and dead-eye marksmanship.

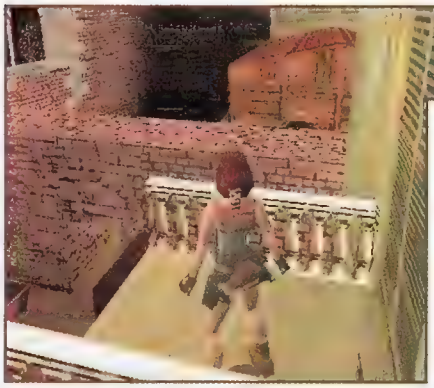
And so it was not *Duke*, or *Quake*, or any of those others that would go down in history as the breakthrough 3D game of 1996, but *Tomb Raider*, winning more than a dozen major awards (including *PC Gamer*'s Action Game Of The Year and Best Graphics) and selling more than 2.3 million copies in the process. Games that sell that many units rarely fail to spawn sequels, and so it should come as no surprise that Core Design is currently prepping *Tomb Raider 2*, a bigger, bolder follow-up set to arrive this Fall. That seems abnormally soon for a sequel, but unlike most follow-ups, which are usually only green-lighted after the original has proved a success, *Tomb Raider 2* was in the development schedule at Core a full six months before work on *Tomb Raider* was even finished. "We knew a full eight or nine months before the game was released that we had something special," says Jeremy Smith, managing director of Core Design. "You could tell, the moment that you saw it, that it was a drop-dead gorgeous product. And there were a lot of extra things that the team wanted to include in the game, but we just didn't have time, and so they went straight into the preliminary design for *Tomb Raider 2*."

Lara Croft's sexy looks and tough attitude have won the hearts of PC gamers. "Strong, independent women are the perfect fantasy girls," says her creator Toby Gard. "The untouchable is always the most desirable..."

> "I think that Lara Croft is now probably the third best-known character in videogaming, after Mario and Sonic."
>
> **Jeremy Smith**
> managing director, Core Design

The Game Structure

When producing a sequel to a mega-hit game, it can be tempting to rest on your laurels and just give gamers more of the same, and all too many times we've seen the less-than-satisfying results of that philosophy. Smith was adamant that



(Left) Lara looks down on the streets of Venice in a *Tomb Raider 2* scene. (Below) Tigers from *Tomb Raider* and the sequel demonstrate the graphical improvements made.

this wouldn't be the case with *Tomb Raider 2*. "It was very important to us that *Tomb Raider 2*, as a sequel, was not like *Doom II*," he says. "*Doom II* was, in my opinion, a level disc. *Quake* was *Doom II*. And *Tomb Raider 2* is our *Quake*. We have continuation, enhancement, and changes to Lara with new moves and new weapons — but at the same time we retain the underlying culture of *Tomb Raider*, because over two million people have told us they like it."

So for the sequel, the basic game structure remains the same — explore huge, exotic platform-based 3D environments around the world, solve puzzles, and kill baddies — but with several neat twists. Among them, some new moves for Lara, including the ability to climb (there are many high walls to scale) and maybe even drive a vehicle, although the design team was still mulling over that one on the day of *PC Gamer*'s visit. Lara will also be sporting some new outfits, including a groovy flying jacket (for the freezing climate of Tibet), and a wetsuit, worn for underwater exploration, and she'll have a new arsenal of weaponry headed up by a lethal-looking harpoon gun. But perhaps most impressive is what the *Tomb Raider 2* team is doing with the game world — although you'll explore ancient ruins as in the first game, there's now a much broader range of environments to explore, and a whole 25 percent of those are in the open air. Expect to navigate your way around the flooded streets of Venice, the Great Wall of China, and even a sunken shipwreck modeled on the Titanic. "We originally felt that, in a sense, a lot of people would have been happy with just more of the same," says Neil Boyd, one of the lead level designers. "But we wanted to make it more interesting for them, and more interesting for ourselves as well. And new environments like the sunken ship lend themselves to different kinds of puzzles as well as being visually more exciting."

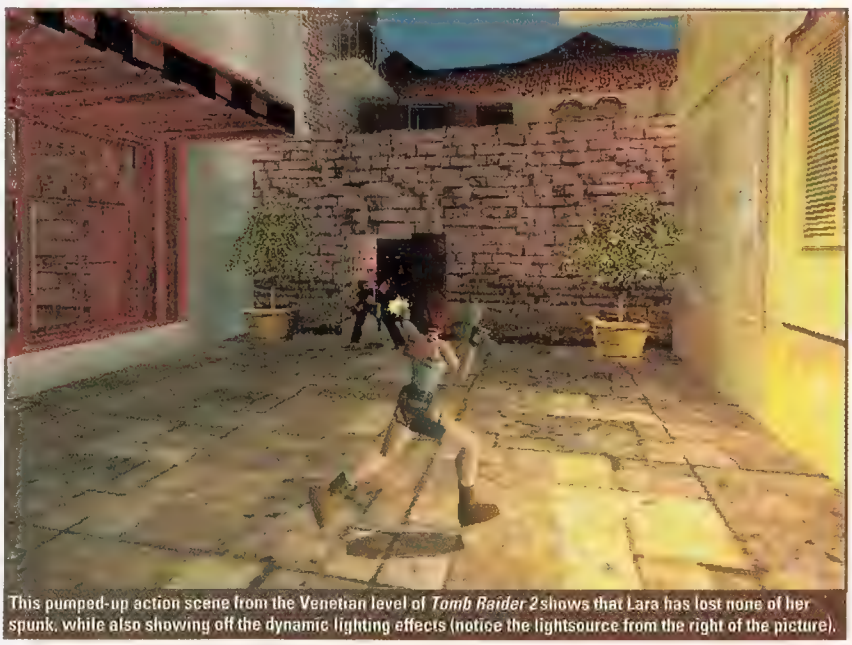
And talking of visual excitement, players are in for a much more atmospheric, spookier *Quake*-like feel in *Tomb Raider 2*, thanks to some smart enhancements to the graphic engine that allow dynamic lighting effects to be generated in real-time. "The dynamic lighting is going to add so much to the game, because we can build that into the puzzles," says Gavin Rummery, lead programmer on *Tomb Raider 2*. "You'll be going into some really spooky, dark areas, and you'll only be able to find your way around by lighting a flare. In those dark areas, there may be rooms where an important clue is written on the wall, but you'll walk right past it if you don't have enough light to see it properly. And apart from that, it just looks good!"

Adding to the visual thrill will be the fact that *Tomb Raider 2* is shipping for the PC with 3D accelerator support. Core Design got a sense that the popularity of 3D cards was on the increase right after it posted the Rendition and 3Dfx patches for *Tomb Raider* on its web site — and more than 30,000 people visited the site to download the upgrades. And the 3D hardware phenomenon has skyrocketed since then, so Core is keen to support those cards right out of the box this time around. To make that happen, however, *Tomb Raider 2* won't be talking to your Verite or Voodoo directly, but will use the one-size-fits-all solution of Microsoft's Direct 3D. "We're a little tired of programmers from all the different 3D card companies coming into our offices and trying to hot-wire our code to work with their accelerators, so we're doing the acceleration though Windows and D3D," explains Smith. "And we'll do that until someone comes up with a standard for 3D acceleration on PC." After the Direct 3D solution, Core still plans to issue specific patches for the major cards through its web site shortly after the game's release.

The underwater sequences in *Tomb Raider 2* will be much darker and murkier, thanks to the novel innovation of dynamic lighting effects.

The Story

The story of *Tomb Raider 2* (which will be told, as in the first game, through a series of atmospheric cut-scenes between levels) centers around ancient Chinese mythology, and in particular a magical artifact known as the Dagger of Xian. In true Indiana Jones tradition, there's more than just good guys out to get their hands on this valuable antiquity, including a violent Chinese/Italian cult and an order of Tibetan warrior monks sworn to protect the dagger. Of course the dagger has been lost for centuries, and so finding it involves trotting around the globe in search of clues



This pumped-up action scene from the Venetian level of *Tomb Raider 2* shows that Lara has lost none of her spunk, while also showing off the dynamic lighting effects (notice the lightsource from the right of the picture).

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— and several run-ins with bad guys along the way.

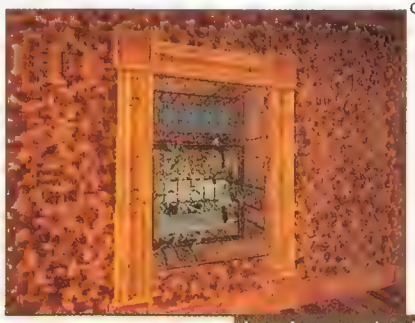
It's a story intended to build on the character of Lara Croft — who above and beyond the success of *Tomb Raider* itself has become a phenomenal success story in her own right. Gameplayers have fallen for her in a big way — Yahoo!'s latest directory lists no less than 28 web sites erected to pay tribute to her, and in her British homeland, she's become something of a cultural icon. She's been the subject of lengthy profiles in respected newspapers like *The London Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*, and the first ever computer-generated cover model for the leading style magazine *The Face*. She's even appeared as a pull-out poster model in the men's magazine *Loaded!*. Lara is currently appearing as part of U2's Pop world tour, crashing through a brick wall on her trademark motorbike to rescue Bono in a video montage that's part of the live set. She's even set to have a pop single of her own, to be recorded with ex-Eurythmic Dave Stewart. And that's only the beginning. Can you imagine *Duke Nukem* achieving this level of publicity?

"I think that Lara is now probably the third best-known character in videogaming, after Mario and Sonic," says Smith. "We're talking to several different companies right now, about TV shows, cartoons, movies... the whole thing. It's really easy to get sucked along on this big Hollywood-type hype, but we're keeping our feet firmly on the ground. We will only spin the Lara Croft franchise out into new areas if what is produced is representative of the game. I don't want to screw up Lara's image by making a bad film. The same applies for her pop single — if it turns out bad, we won't release it."

The Character

So where did she come from, this 29-year-old renegade daughter of an English Lord? Lara Croft was the creation of Toby Gard, who also came up with the whole concept of *Tomb Raider*, as Smith recalls. "It was three and a half years ago, and PCs were going through the roof with the announcement of the Pentium and all the new graphics cards. So the concept came to us to do an Indiana Jones-type game involving the exploration of ancient tombs. Now the characters in games and in the movies around that time were all very stereotypical, big male dudes, so Toby said 'I want to do this game with a female character'. And we all said 'Whaaaat? Are you serious?' We were nervous about the idea because it was against everything that was going on in games at that time. But Toby was adamant — it was a new angle, it hadn't been done before and it could be really cool. So we agreed," he says.

"It wasn't until a year later that Toby actually started work on the game, and the first thing he came to us with was the character. He showed us Lara, and we were all totally 'Wow, yeah, she works!' By this time, the *Tank Girl* movie had just come out, and while it wasn't the greatest movie in the world, it sparked off this whole idea in the media of 'macho woman'. So it was perfect, everything slotted into place. And we were all sure, by three or four months into development, that Lara Croft was right for this game. She had the moves, she looked gorgeous, she had attitude and the animations were fantastic. We couldn't have done



Just a few examples of what the new, improved Lara can do in *Tomb Raider 2* — clockwise from left: she can climb sheer surfaces with ease, smash through windows, and her ponytail swishes behind her as she runs.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

TOMB RAIDER FANS who have been anxious for an extra fix of new levels may have to wait a little longer for the *Unfinished Business* expert-level expansion pack reported recently in *PC Gamer*. The new levels are currently under revision, as are the various possibilities for distributing them. "The original idea was that we would make two extra levels and include them in a new version of *Tomb Raider* as a value-added bonus," explains Jeremy Smith. "It would sell at the same price, but now with the new levels, a screensaver, and some Windows wallpaper included for free. But of the two new levels we produced, we were only happy with one of them — the other one was way, way too hard."

Lara's website at *www.tombraider.com* will soon be the home of free *Tomb Raider* levels.

Core is currently tweaking those levels to make them a little less tough, as well as creating two more. The current plan is for all four new levels, along with those other Lara-related goodies, to be included in a *Tomb Raider Special Edition* for release by Eidos Interactive in November. In the meantime, one of those levels may well be given away free this summer on the *Tomb Raider* web site at *www.tombraider.com*.

And plans are already underway for a series of expansion pack for *Tomb Raider 2* — the first of them is scheduled to appear next year. The packs will include seven new levels, along with new music, new animations, and new gameplay features. "We'll do it properly," Smith promises.

Tomb Raider 2's baddies were first conceived as color cartoon sketches, like this tattooed cult member.

that with a male character."

During Lara's development, she went through a variety of tweaks and make-overs — her original name of Laura was scrapped for fear of sounding too English for the American market, and alternative names like Lara Cruise were briefly experimented with. Early graphical renderings had her wearing combat-style camouflage pants, a baseball cap, and sporting a ponytail, but those early costume ideas were abandoned because they made her look, in the words of Gard, "too Nazi-like." The ponytail had to go, too, because the programmers couldn't make it move as realistically as they wanted to — although, as part of the graphical enhancements made to *Tomb Raider 2*, Lara's waist-length braid has been restored, and now swings dynamically behind her as she runs.

Core has come under some flak from certain quarters for "exploiting" Lara and creating a sexist fantasy figure designed to appeal to the game's target market of young males aged 15-30. After all, she is a very sexy woman, even for a computer-generated image, and she's almost unrealistically well-endowed in the chest department. And some of the ways in which pictures of her have been "modified" on the Internet suggests that many gamers have enthusiastically responded to her sexy side. But Gard, while admitting that his creation was made to be sexy and desirable, insists that she's anything but a sexist stereotype. "Lara was designed to be a tough, self-reliant, intelligent woman," he said in a recent interview with *The Face*. "She confounds all the sexist clichés apart from the fact that she's got an unbelievable figure. Strong, independent women are the perfect fantasy girls — the untouchable is always the most desirable."

MULTI-PLAYER *TOMB RAIDER*?

SINCE *TOMB RAIDER*'S RELEASE, gamers have been crying out for a multi-player mode, and hopes were high that one would be included as part of *Tomb Raider 2*.

Alas, it looks highly unlikely that you'll be playing online against your friends any time soon. "We had thought about multi-player," says *Tomb Raider 2* project leader Gavin Rummery. "A lot of people had mentioned it, and we know that it's becoming a big deal in gaming now. And I still wouldn't say that we've completely ruled it out, but *Tomb Raider* really is meant to be a one-player experience. We just haven't heard any good ideas for how a multi-player mode would work. With Lara's auto-targeting, it would be a bit of a strange combat game — if that's what you want, you'd be better off playing *Quake*. Plus there's the issue of animating half-a-dozen Laras on-screen, each with thousands of frames of animation — to try to do that would be ridiculous."

"The Americans have pressed us really hard for multi-player, and I agree, I'm the biggest fan of playing games on the Internet," adds Jeremy Smith.

"We're trying to appeal to, and appease those people who want multi-player, but *Tomb Raider* isn't a multi-player game. If someone, anyone, could tell us how it could work, we'd put it in. I'd pay them for it! We even put a notice out on the Internet inviting help and suggestions from gamers.

"In the meantime, we're considering certain things. For example, the secrets in *Tomb Raider* weren't that exciting — they were great fun to find, but when you found one it, might just be a small medikit, which I always felt a bit robbed by. So we have ideas for making the secrets that you find passwords, and if you find all the passwords they'll combine to give you a secret address on the Internet from which you can download free *Tomb Raider* stuff like exclusive extra levels.

We understand that people could then just swap the codes or the levels, so we're working on ways to make that secure," Smith says.

> "We're trying to appeal to those people who want multi-player, but *Tomb Raider* isn't a multi-player game. If someone, anyone, could tell us how it could work, we'd put it in."
>
> **Jeremy Smith**
> managing director, Core Design

Lara recently posed for a "virtual fashion shoot" for *The Face*, a British style magazine, posing in a variety of outfits like this designer dress, an Avengers-style catsuit and the Gucci bikini seen on our front cover.

What Went Wrong?

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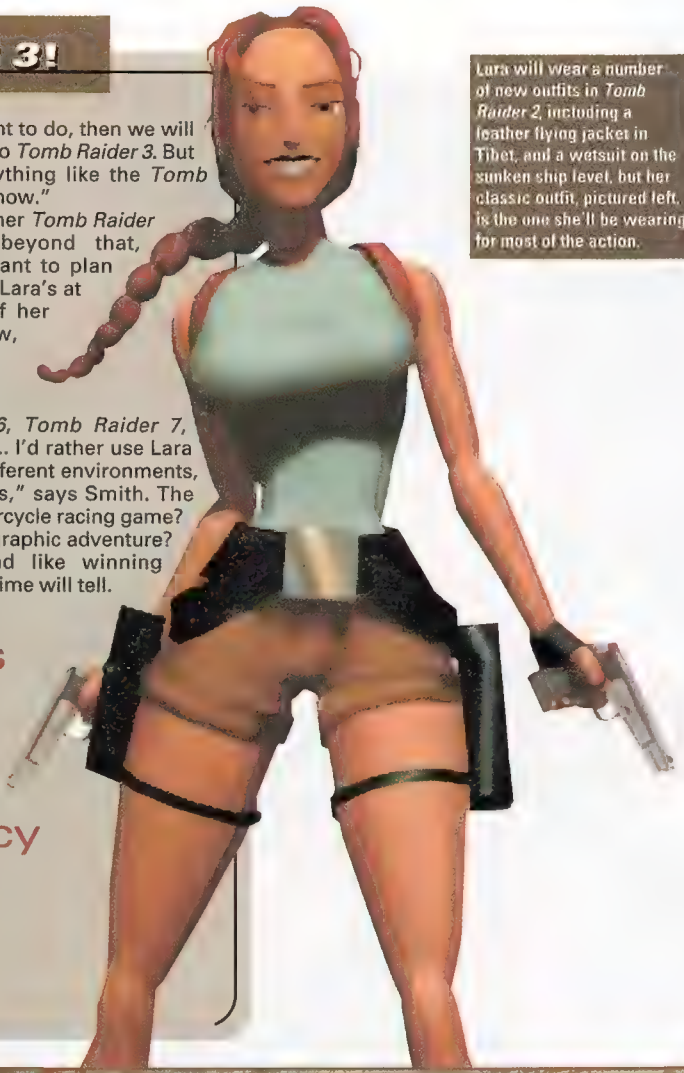
NEXT UP... TOMB RAIDER 3!

WELL, HERE'S THE GOOD NEWS for *Tomb Raider* fanatics who just can't get enough of it... there is a third installment in the pipeline. "There will be a *Tomb Raider 3*, but not for a while," reveals Jeremy Smith.

"We need to take a time-out now and assess where Lara is, and where we want to take her. The current *Tomb Raider 2* team will probably be all Lara'd out by the time we do it. We have new ideas already for what we want to do with the engine, provided the hardware base allows us to do it," says Smith.

"Our plan for the *Tomb Raider 3* engine is pretty special, and there will have to be pretty powerful machines to enable us to do it. Once we have them, we will then go back and re-invent the *Tomb Raider* world with a new 3D engine — and if that engine can be the one that we want to do, then we will most certainly do *Tomb Raider 3*. But it won't be anything like the *Tomb Raider* you see now."

As for further *Tomb Raider* games even beyond that, Smith is reluctant to plan too far ahead. "Lara's at the pinnacle of her career right now, but I don't want to fall into the trap of doing *Tomb Raider 6*, *Tomb Raider 7*, *Tomb Raider 8*... I'd rather use Lara as an icon in different environments, different genres," says Smith. The Lara Croft motorcycle racing game? The Lara Croft graphic adventure? They all sound like winning ideas, but only time will tell.



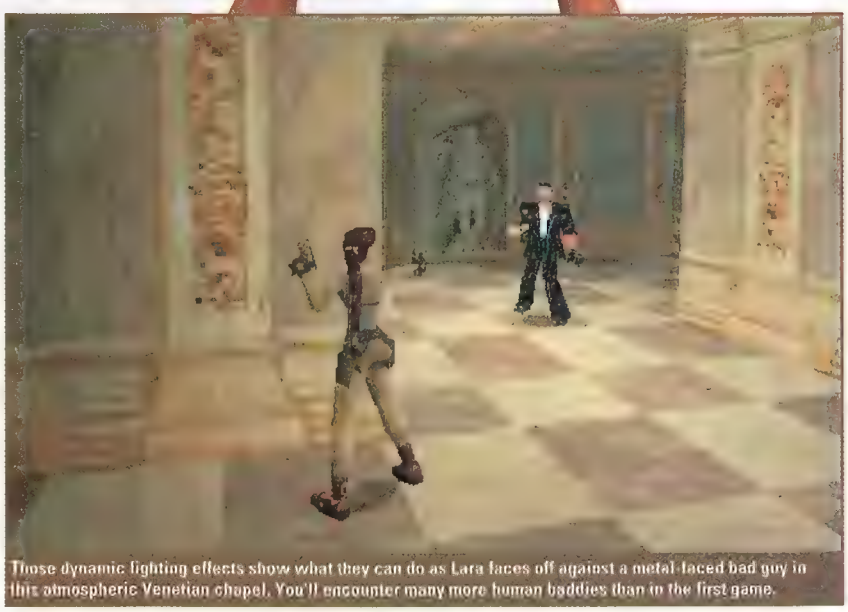
Lara will wear a number of new outfits in *Tomb Raider 2*, including a leather flying jacket in Tibet, and a wetsuit on the sunken ship level, but her classic outfit, pictured left, is the one she'll be wearing for most of the action.

> "*Tomb Raider 3*, at this point in time, is just a twinkle in our eye. But twinkles have a tendency to become reality!"
>
> **Jeremy Smith**
> managing director, Core Design

The Team

But while Lara Croft is undeniably an enigmatic character, her creator is perhaps even more so. Along with lead programmer Paul Douglas, Gard quit the *Tomb Raider* team and Core Design just a couple of months after the game was released. To this day, no one is quite sure why. Industry news was made recently when Shiny Entertainment's Dave Perry proudly boasted that he had "poached" the pair of them, and that they would be joining the Shiny team at their offices in Laguna Beach, CA. Smith publicly denied this, and after a brief flurry of Perry and Smith trading comments in the media about whose team Gard and Douglas were on, it turned out that they were on neither — the pair have left Core Design, but they won't be joining Shiny. Instead, they're setting up their own game company and a publishing deal is expected to be announced soon. In the meantime, Gard is notoriously difficult to reach and isn't talking to the press about his immediate future.

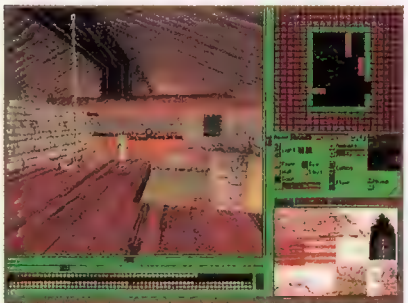
Smith is philosophical about their departure. "Toby and Paul going was sad, obviously," he says. "Quite why they wanted to leave, I'll probably never really know. It certainly couldn't have been monetary issues because they earned a lot of money from *Tomb Raider*, but I wish them well. I just hope they're doing the right thing."



Those dynamic lighting effects show what they can do as Lara faces off against a metal-faced bad guy in this atmospheric Venetian chapel. You'll encounter many more human baddies than in the first game.

But what affect would their departure have on the development of the sequel? After all, Gard was the visionary behind the first game as well as the lead graphic artist, and Douglas was the chief programmer on the project. "Well, we knew that Toby and Paul never wanted to work on *Tomb Raider 2*," says Smith. "They wanted to finish *Tomb Raider*, and after that, have nothing to do with it. So their departure had no affect on *Tomb Raider 2* at all — they never even planned to play a part in it."

"Toby and Paul's departure made



The custom-built level editor makes it a snap to design the complex worlds of *Tomb Raider 2*.

things a little bit more difficult for us," says Gavin Rummery, who succeeded Gard as project leader for the sequel, "but there were enough people on the *Tomb Raider 2* team who'd worked on the original game to make sure we knew what we were doing."

So, *Tomb Raider 2* is on target for its planned release this Fall, and from what we've seen so far, it looks all set to unseat the original as the PC's pre-eminent 3D adventure game. And as you'll see from the various sidebars around this feature, this latest adventure will by no means be Lara's last. There will be level packs, special editions, and more sequels, just so long as Lara remains popular — which looks set to be for a long time to come!

PCG

Lara looks stunning in her new wetsuit, which she'll be wearing for underwater action — there is even talk of her sub-aqua gear being sponsored by a real scuba equipment manufacturer as part of an innovative licensing deal.

LARA MEETS XENA?

CORE DESIGN may be concerned about over-milking the *Tomb Raider* franchise, but its parent company, Eidos Interactive, is certainly keen to see if that style of gameplay will work in other universes. Enter *Deathtrap Dungeon*, the brainchild of roleplaying guru (and Eidos chief) Ian Livingstone. *Deathtrap Dungeon* shares many similarities with *Tomb Raider* in gameplay terms — it's a mix of exploration, puzzle-solving, and baddy-battling in a 3D environment — but this title sets out to appeal to a slightly different segment of the PC gaming public, namely roleplaying fans.

No doubt influenced in part by the success of *Diablo*, *Deathtrap Dungeon* boasts all kinds of roleplaying aspects, such as magic, armor, fantastical weapons, dungeon beasties, and different character classes, but simplifies them to make them more accessible to the casual gamer. The idea is that anyone can pick this up and get into some hack'n'slash arcade roleplaying without getting bogged down in the more complex gameplay normally associated with the genre. Expect much more combat than in the comparatively sedate *Tomb Raider* — here you'll be swinging your sword and casting your spells at manic baddies at almost every turn.

Impressively, *Deathrap Dungeon* does a lot of things even *Tomb Raider 2* doesn't — there's a wider selection of close-quarter and projectile weapons, dozens of magic spells, the option to play from a *Quake*-style first-person perspective and even the choice of a male or female hero! Like Lara, both characters are equally athletic and have no shortage of acrobatic flips and fighting moves at their disposal.

The graphics in *Deathtrap Dungeon* look pretty amazing, especially when viewed using a Direct-3D compatible card.

Like *Tomb Raider 2*, *Deathrap Dungeon* will be shipping with Direct 3D accelerator support right out of the box, and the early test dungeons that we witnessed running through a 3Dfx card during our visit to Eidos' development HQ were a sight to behold.

Deathrap Dungeon certainly looks very promising — it should be just the ticket for gamers who like a bit of traditional fighting fantasy mixed in with their 3D gameplay, and with Ian Livingstone's terrific reputation in the fantasy field, this has all the makings of a winner. Look out for it in September.

In *Deathtrap Dungeon*, danger lurks around every corner. Good thing you've got that huge sword.

Just as in the original *Tomb Raider*, the male or female hero of *Deathrap Dungeon* will have to do battle with a deadly Tyrannosaurus Rex!

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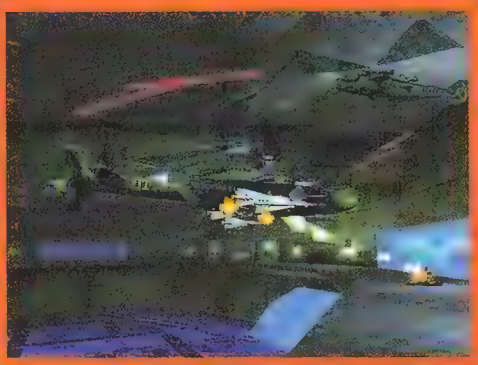

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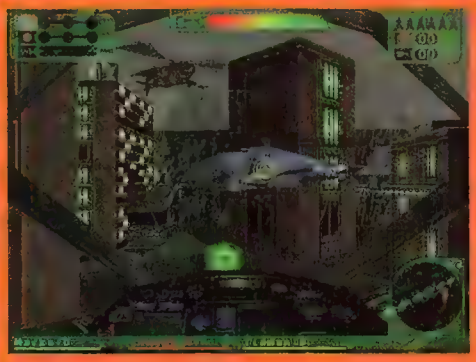

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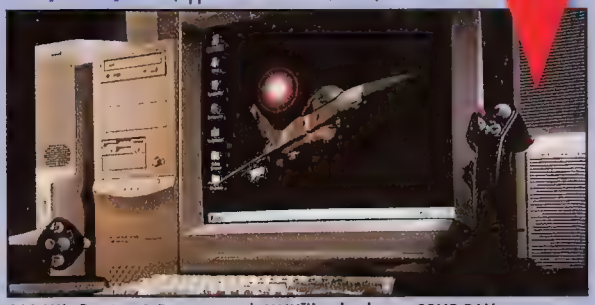

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Product Information Number 107

Give 'Em Hellfires

AH-64D Longbow was one of the most critically and commercially successful air combat sims ever created. Now Jane's Combat Simulations has given the game's creators the task of topping themselves, and we've got the inside story on how they plan to do it with *Longbow 2*.

When you're responsible for one of the finest air combat simulations ever made for the PC, what do you do for an encore?

That's the question that faced Andy Hollis once he and the rest of his "Skunk Works" team finished *AH-64D Longbow* for Jane's Combat Simulations. But it's unlikely that Hollis spent much time worrying about how to follow up the overwhelming success of *Longbow*; by now, he must be very accustomed to the challenge of following his own hit games.

See, *Longbow* isn't Hollis' first hit. Not by a long shot. In his years with MicroProse — back when that company was the name to know in air combat sims — Hollis played a principal role in creating *Gunship*, *F-19 Stealth Fighter*, *F-15 Strike Eagle II*, and *F-15 Strike Eagle III*. All classics in the flight sim genre, and most of them groundbreakers. Hollis knows that the way to follow up a great game is to create another great game. Easier said than done, sure, but he's had a lot of experience doing exactly that.

Wish List

When Hollis put on his executive-producer hat and sat down with Director Will McBurnett to decide how to make *Longbow 2* even better than its predecessor, the two weren't starting from square one. They already had a long wish list of all the features they had wanted to include in the original game, features they were forced to leave out because of time constraints or the limitations of the hardware they wanted to support.

Multi-player action was high on their wish list for the original game. It was also the feature most frequently requested by gamers. But Hollis and the *Longbow 2* team didn't want to include multi-player options unless it could be more than the sort of free-for-all deathmatch found in some other air combat sims. The attack helicopter's job is to make air-to-ground strikes in support of ground troops; head-to-head dogfights just wouldn't make sense in a chopper sim.

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meant making it possible for multiple gamers to fly cooperatively or against each other in full-scale battles, destroying their opponents' ground troops and supporting their own, and only going head-to-head as a last resort. But that also meant a lot more work than just tacking on a deathmatch option. It meant creating the Holy Grail of air combat sims: a truly dynamic land campaign in which the success of the ground war is affected by the gamer's performance in the air.

Hollis also wanted to let *Longbow* fans fly other helicopters, scouting enemy territory in the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior or delivering and rescuing troops in the big UH-60 Black Hawk. And as the *Longbow* team watched 3D acceleration technology make its rapid move from high-end graphics workstations to the PC, they became interested in taking advantage of it.

The team originally intended to bring some of these new features to *Longbow* via add-on packs, but as the wish list grew, it became clear they were talking about a whole new project.

"As we started thinking about those features and actually doing some work on them, each individual one kind of grew and grew until the whole thing started to merge together into a completely new game," Hollis says. And *Longbow 2* was born.

Multi-Player

"Everybody keeps talking about multi-player in *Longbow*," Hollis says, "and of course we've been wanting it forever. And we've actually had multi-player working in a kind of test-bed here since before Christmas.

"We wanted to provide multi-player at a level of functionality that no one has done before," he says. "Of course we're going to support head-to-head and deathmatch encounters, but what we really wanted to do was make the player feel like he was really part of team tactics in either a cooperative or force-on-force situation."

Hollis says *Longbow 2* is currently targeted to support eight players over a local-area network. Over the Internet, he says, four players will be a more realistic number, depending on the quality of your connection. And, of course, there will be modem support for two players.

In trying to define what they were shooting for, the team came up with a term that would be right at home in the most jargon-filled military manual: "Seamlessly integrated, multi-position, multi-chopper, multi-player." No doubt the U.S. Army would "simplify" that to SIMPMCMP.

"It's a real mouthful," Hollis admits, "but it really says the whole thing."

What it boils down to is that any gamer in a multi-player session of *Longbow 2* can be in either position (pilot or co-pilot/gunner) of any of a number of Longbows on either side of the battle.

"Not only that, but we don't limit it to Longbows," Hollis says. "We're also giving you the opportunity to fly the Kiowa Warrior and the Black Hawk."

The inspiration for adding the new choppers was a new Army concept being tested not too far from the Austin, Texas, offices of Origin Systems, where Hollis and the "Skunk Works" crew work their magic.

"The guys up the street here at Fort Hood have got a couple of the prototype Longbows," Hollis says. "The squadrons that are using them are part of an effort called Force 21. It's the 'digital battlefield of tomorrow,' where they hook together the avionics of the Longbow with those of Kiowas and Black Hawks.

"All this stuff is integrated, so targeting information that comes out of a scout Kiowa, for example, can be passed on to a Longbow, can be passed up to headquarters — targets can be passed around, data can be passed around, visuals can be passed around. That's really what this game is all about."

Longbow 2 Executive Producer Andy Hollis stands beside a Longbow at Fort Hood, giving us an idea of just how big these choppers are.

The helicopters in *Longbow 2* will be at least four times as detailed as those in the original sim. Note the pilot's and co-pilot's heads, visible through a translucent canopy.

Multi-Chopper

The Kiowa and Black Hawk won't just be available in the multi-player game; they'll also be available in single-player campaigns, Hollis says.

"In fact, you'll have to fly the other helicopters for certain kinds of missions you come across," he says.

The Kiowa Warrior wouldn't be well suited to a strike mission, but with its Target Acquisition and Display System (TADS) camera mounted above its main rotor, it's better than the Longbow for recon missions where visual contact with targets is a must. And while the Black Hawk doesn't pack the destructive punch of the Longbow or the eye-in-the-sky capability of the Kiowa, it's essential for carrying infantry to and from combat.

The Black Hawk doesn't have a pilot/co-pilot arrangement like the other choppers, but Hollis says the *Longbow 2* team still has plans to let two players work together in a single UH-60 — one player will fly the Black Hawk while the other plays

Like its predecessor, *Longbow 2* will feature gorgeous, almost photo-realistic menu screens, like this one from the Northern Iran/Iraq/Azerbaijan campaign.

The terrain in *Longbow 2* will be four times as detailed as *Longbow*'s, allowing for battlefields with considerably more ruggedness. The Longbow's ability to hug the terrain for stealth will be even more clearly depicted.

door-gunner, manning the big machine gun in the chopper's cargo area.

All these helicopters flying around means new duties for the gamer, Hollis says.

"You'll have responsibility not just for your own helicopter, but for others in your group," he says. If that sounds reminiscent of an earlier multi-chopper sim, MicroProse's *Gunship 2000*, it's no coincidence.

"In fact, for a while there we internally called the game *Longbow 2000*," Hollis says.

In *Longbow 2*, you'll be given multiple objectives to accomplish in a single mission — objectives that can best be met by different helicopters. For example, you might be told to destroy an artillery position *and* gather intelligence about enemy movements. Naturally, you'll want to send Longbows out to trash the artillery, but a Kiowa scout will do a better job with the recon mission. If you decide to handle the Kiowa mission yourself, the game's artificial intelligence will control the Longbows on their strike mission. Once in the air, the AI-controlled choppers are on their own, but you'll have control over planning the other group's mission, so you're still responsible for its success.

In multi-player sessions, gamers can work as pilot and co-pilot in the same chopper, or fly separately. They can cooperate or go head-to-head.

The Holy Grail

Obviously, the multi-chopper, multi-player aspects of the game wouldn't mean much if campaigns were scripted affairs where your success in one mission had little effect on the next. So Hollis and Co. are going after that most coveted feature in the simulation genre, an honest-to-goodness dynamic campaign.

"That means a lot of different things to a lot of different people," Hollis says. "What it means to us — and what we've implemented for *Longbow 2* — is a system whereby missions are presented by a mission generator that evaluates the current situation.

"We keep track of how many helicopters are out there, we keep track of weapons — there are limited numbers of these things — and the front will move according to who owns what sections of the battlefield," he says. "It's your ground forces that you're trying to support. And it's not just whether or not you get some score above a certain threshold that affects whether that front line moves; it's whether or not your forces are able to beat the enemy that they're fighting."

For example, if your ground forces in one area are faced with overwhelming enemy forces, you may turn the battle around and ensure victory by taking out a line of enemy tanks in your Longbow. Or intelligence you gather on a recon mission in a Kiowa may prevent your AI-controlled ground troops from being surprised and overrun by the other side.

Hollis says *Longbow 2* will have two different campaigns, both of which can be fought in single-player or multi-player mode. The first will be set in the Northern Iran/Iraq/Azerbaijan area,

In addition to the Iran/Iraq/Azerbaijan cooperative campaign, multiple gamers will be able to go head-to-head in a National Training Center wargame.

The Birds of War

The Helicopters of *Longbow 2*

In a real battle, it's not just a couple of attack helicopters against the world. So the designers of *Longbow 2* will give us two more vital choppers to fly and command, creating a hard-rocking power trio that makes ZZ Top look like the Vienna Boys' Choir.

AH-64D Longbow

The Longbow is the world's most advanced attack helicopter. Army projections say its fire control radar and radar-guided Hellfire missiles will make it 10 to 20 times as effective as its predecessor, the Apache — and anyone who followed Desert Storm on CNN knows how effective the Apache was.

OH-58D Kiowa Warrior

This state-of-the-art scout helo is the Longbow's eye in the sky. It uses a mast-mounted (i.e. above the main rotor) Target Acquisition and Display System to peer over ridge lines and get a detailed picture of enemy positions without exposing itself to anti-aircraft fire.

UH-60 Black Hawk

The Black Hawk is the workhorse of the modern Army's air cavalry. Like the Huey "slicks" of the Vietnam era, it carries infantry to and from the battlefield, and it can carry a big, door-mounted turret to help clear out a safe place for troops to land.

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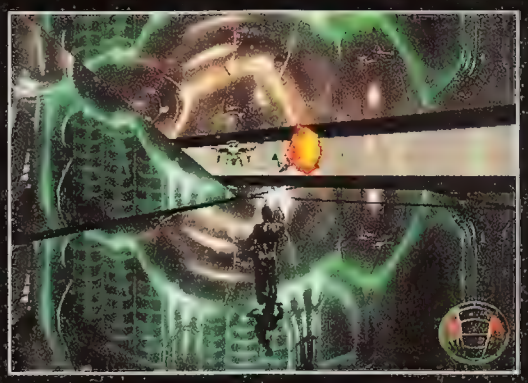

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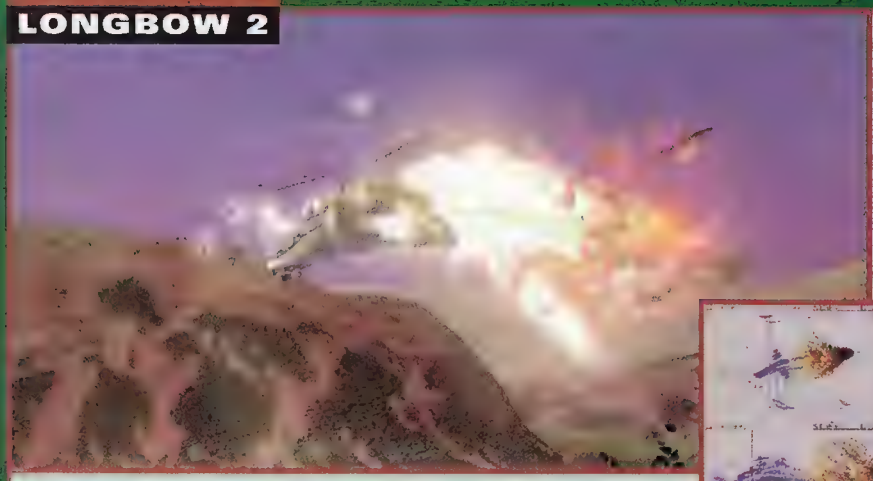

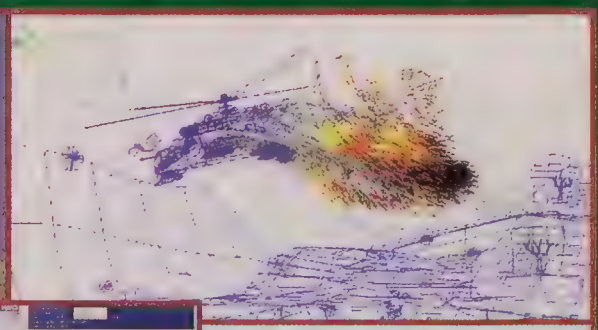

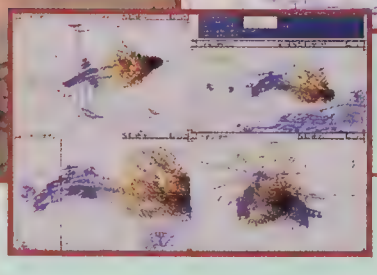

Since *Longbow 2* will have a dynamic campain rather than a scripted one, it'll be harder to include the kind of lovely cut-scenes that graced *Longbow* — but the new game will work them in occasionally.

with its hilly, rugged terrain. In multi-player action, this will be a cooperative campaign.

The other is a head-to-head campaign, set at the Army's National Training Center at Fort Irwin in California, where a lot of Force 21 analysis and training takes place.

"It's kind of like 'Top Gun' for the Army," Hollis says.

Wargames at the National Training Center use what's known as "vismod" equipment — where U.S. military hardware is visually modified to resemble Soviet equipment, and the side using that equipment mimics Soviet doctrine and tactics. It's a perfect conceit for pitting Longbow against Longbow in a force-on-force campaign.

"If you choose to do 'vismod,' then one team's equipment looks on the outside like Soviet equipment, but works like U.S. equipment," Hollis says. Alternatively, you can choose to fly choppers that look the same, but are colored tan or green to distinguish one force from the other.

An average multi-player campaign will consist of around ten missions, but there will be options for longer or shorter campaigns. Players won't have to resolve a whole campaign in one online session; they'll be able to save the campaign and return to it later. *Longbow 2* even takes into account the possibility that the host, or "master," of a multi-player game might not be able to continue the campaign — the master can E-mail a save file to another participant, who then becomes the new master.

And multi-player action doesn't have to be limited to a drawn-out campaign; everything that a single player can do in *Longbow 2* can be done with multiple players, including single missions and instant-action combat as well as both campaigns.

"Our multi-player isn't just an add-on on top of everything," says Director Will McBurnett. "It's definitely part of the game."

Longbow 2 is slated to ship in the Fall with built-in support for 3Dfx-based graphics accelerators, but it won't strictly require one.

Visual Contact

In addition to all the new gameplay elements, *Longbow 2* will feature some major cosmetic improvements. Hollis says the game's "terrain mesh," the wireframe net that defines the mountains and valleys of the battlefield, will be four times as detailed as it was in *Longbow*. That means more realistic maps and more rugged terrain, which is where attack choppers thrive.

The 3D models of the helicopters in *Longbow 2* will have at least four times as much detail as in the original game, Hollis says, and some will have much more than that.

"We're at the point now where the objects in the new game start looking like the objects in the flicks for the original game," he says, referring to the extremely detailed, pre-rendered 3D art created on high-end Silicon Graphics machines for *Longbow*'s intro movie and cut-scenes.

The choppers in *Longbow 2* will have more moving parts, too. The Longbow's chin-mounted TADS camera and pilot's night vision system will rotate independently of each other in external views — you'll even be able to look through the translucent windscreen to see the pilot's and co-pilot's heads moving.

The Longbow's radar dome — the gadget that sits atop its main rotor — is part of an upgrade expected to make it ten to 20 times as effective as the original Apache.

A lot of this added detail is made possible by the addition of 3D hardware support. Hollis says *Longbow 2* will ship with built-in support for 3D accelerator cards based on the 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics chip. While *Longbow 2* will be a Windows 95 product, it won't include Direct3D support — but the team plans to add support for other 3D cards after the game is released. And gamers without 3D cards won't necessarily be left out in the cold.

"The cool part is that we can do every single effect in software as well," Hollis says, "although we have to limit the availability of some of those things just to make the frame rate good."

Of course, increased graphic detail isn't free, and some gamers may be stunned by the hardware requirements projected for *Longbow 2*. At press time, the game was expected to require a 133MHz Pentium with 16MB of RAM as a minimum. A 3Dfx-based accelerator card is recommended; if you don't have one of those, you'll probably want a 166MHz Pentium for good performance, Hollis says. Pretty steep requirements, but it looks like every bit of that horsepower is going to show up on the screen in the form of a drop-dead gorgeous flight sim.

If it Ain't Broke . . . .

Gamers who fell in love with the original *Longbow* will be pleased to know that Hollis and Co. aren't messing with any of the things that made the first game great. The detailed and believable avionics are still here. So are the beautifully detailed menu screens and the stirring 3D-rendered cut-scenes that appear as a campaign unfolds and somehow look more real than reality.

Best of all, the amazingly friendly and informative hands-on tutorials that made *Longbow* such a pleasure to learn will make a return appearance in *Longbow 2*. Hollis says they've even managed to bring back the same real, live instructor pilot from Fort Hood to reprise his role in the new game (you remember this guy — he's the one who sounds so much like the instructor Tommy Lee Jones played in the attack-chopper movie *Firebirds*). With that calm, laconic voice guiding you, it should be just as easy to learn to fly the Kiowa and Black Hawk as it was to learn the Longbow.

The original *Longbow* won "Best Air Combat Simulation" honors for 1996 from five major gaming magazines, including *PC Gamer*, and it sold so well that Electronic Arts is reportedly expecting the sequel to be one of its all-time best-selling games. It's going to be a very hard act to follow, but it looks like Hollis, McBurnett, and the rest of the *Longbow 2* team are on track to blow all our minds again.

PCG

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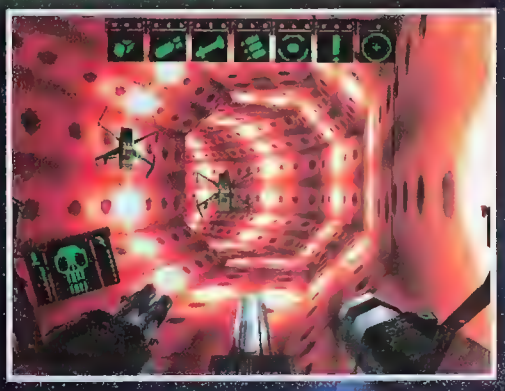
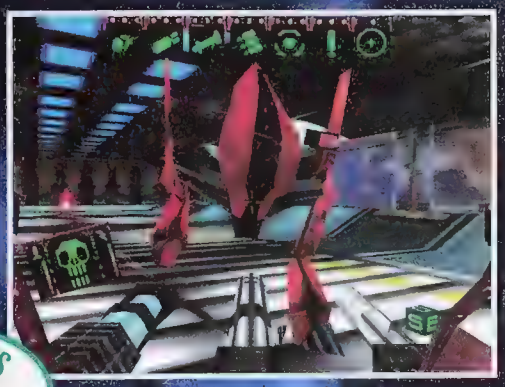
Terracide is the new technological feast from EIDOS Interactive that exploits the latest 3D acceleration technology.





FEATURES INCLUDE:

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- Over 20 lethal weapons, from rapid fire photon cannons to gravity bombs
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- 20 Levels spread across 7 ships

If you buy only one game on a 3D card this year, it should be Terracide.

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Product Information Number 134

A NEW BREED OF RPG

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MATURE
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AGES 17+
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State-of-the-art digital animation lets you see the emotions of the people you talk to. Watch someone smile at your compliment or grow angry at your insults! Your decisions will have significant moral implications.

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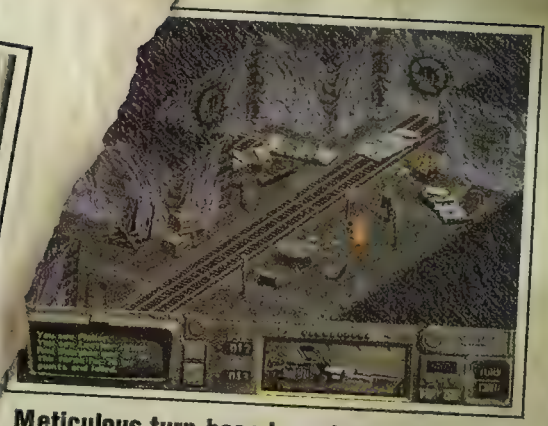
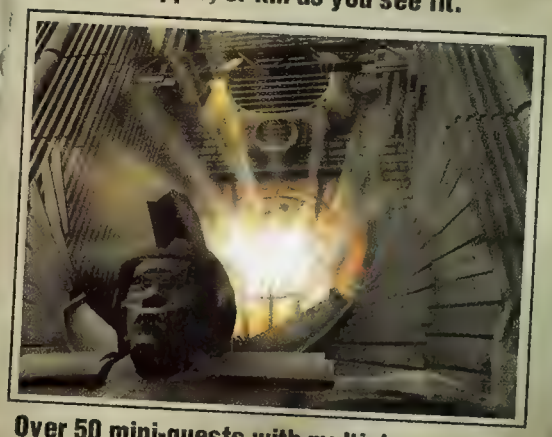


Meticulous turn-based combat system lets you target specific body parts to wound, cripple, or kill as you see fit.



Over 50 mini-quests with multiple solutions take you through devastated wastelands such as Rad Scorpion dens, Junktown, and the Brotherhood of Steel.

Victims don't just perish they get cut in half, melt into a pile of goo, and explode like a blood sausage into chunks of flesh.

ARRIVING AUGUST 1997

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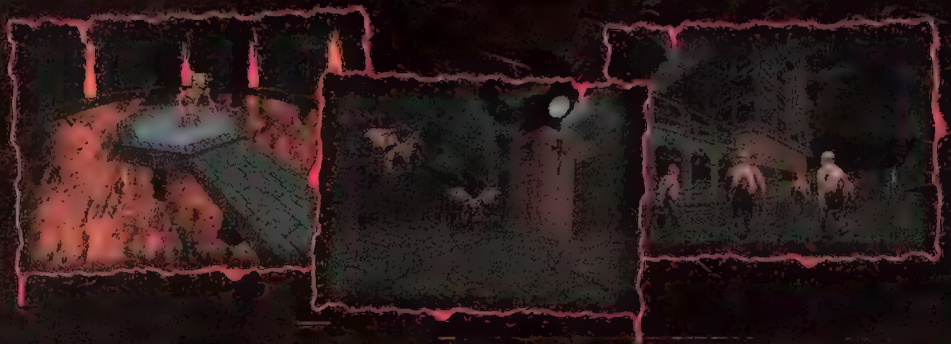

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Product Information Number 360

Printed in U.S.A

Big things, small packages

While we usually devote this space to some insignificant, hastily written, and often poorly conceived stab at humor, this month we will humbly attempt to honor one of our own for doing what comes naturally, as Disc Editor Joseph Novicki and his wife Elizabeth celebrate the arrival of the newest Novicki — a bouncing baby boy named Samuel Grayson Novicki.

No one could be happier for the proud parents than the *PC Gamer* team, who've been right there offering support and help from the time of conception until the awe-inspiring birth!

During the long months of pregnancy, Joe prepared himself for the rigors of fatherhood by challenging countless rivals in *Heroes of Might and Magic II*. When we asked him how *HOM&M II* would help him become a better father, his eyes would fill with tears, he'd sigh breathlessly and reply, "I don't know, but it just feels like the thing to do."

Say hello to the littlest *PC Gamer*...

As the months progressed and his condition became more frail, Joe continued to work right up to the last minute, managing to put a happy face on his ordeal every time Todd asked sarcastically, "Hey Joe! Have you had that baby yet?" — but we knew the waiting was taking its toll.

But finally, on May 25, 1997, young Samuel arrived into a brave new world with all of Joe's familiar traits, such as screaming, crying, and demanding to be fed.

The *PC Gamer* team wasn't present during the birth (apparently the doctors had a problem with us trying to use the cardio monitors for a quick game of *Red Alert*), but during our long wait, we passed the time by deciding first baby-holding rights with a frantic *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* match. But regardless of who won that match (Lisa), we were all winners that day (they had free cookies and Kool-aid in the lobby).

Congratulations again to Joe and Beth, and a hearty welcome to Samuel. Whatever you do, just don't ask Joe about where babies come from. You really, really don't want to know.

Hardware Requirements

With each *PC Gamer* review, you'll find two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements and the hardware configurations we recommend as the *least* you'll need to really enjoy the game. While a game will run on the minimum system the manufacturer specifies, it might not run all that well. Because of this, we test each game on several systems so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll *really* need.

THE PC GAMER RATINGS SYSTEM

100%-90% CLASSIC
Not many games can earn a rating over 90%, and even fewer can approach the magic 100. Anything that we rate over 90% is an instant classic — a game that's truly significant in both content and design, and one that we'd recommend without reservation to anyone interested in PC gaming.

89%-80% EXCELLENT
These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your attention, though it may not make any significant advances over its rivals. Also, some genuine benchmark games of decidedly specialist taste will fall into this area — it may be the best Cavalry simulation on the market, but not if you want to relive Little Bighorn.

79%-70% VERY GOOD
These are pretty good games, which we would recommend to fans of the particular genre although it's a safe bet that there are probably better games out there.

69%-60% GOOD
A reasonable, above-average game. It may be worth buying, but probably has a few significant flaws that keep it from earning a higher rating.

59%-50% FAIR
Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but not a very good way to spend your gaming dollar, either.

49%-40% BELOW AVERAGE
Poor quality. Only a few, slightly redeeming features keep them from falling into the abyss of the next category.

39%-0% DON'T BOTHER
Just terrible games — and the lower you go, the worse they get. Avoid these titles like the Plague — and don't say we didn't warn you!

PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Every month, we honor the best games we see — those earning 88% or above — with our Editors' Choice award. It's not easy to earn, and there are a lot of excellent games that fall just short of the honor. So when you see the *PCG* Editors' Choice logo on a game at a local software shop, you can bet it's among the best.

FRONT PAGE SPORTS: GOLF

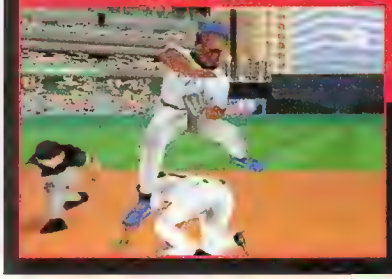
p.114

JACK NICKLAUS 4

p.100

SHADOWS OVER RIVA

p.130

TRIPLE PLAY 98

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Star Trek: Generations

Win95

Category:	Action/Adventure
Developer:	MicroProse
Publisher:	MicroProse, 2490 Mariner Square Loop, Alameda, CA 94501 (510) 522-1164

Required	We Recommend
Win95; Pentium 90; 4X CD-ROM drive; 16MB RAM; 75MB HD space; DirectX-compatible sound card; 2MB SVGA graphics; Mouse	Pentium 200 MMX; 32MB RAM

Generations was arguably the worst Trek movie ever, and the game based on it is nearly as big a disappointment.

It's common knowledge that games based on movies — even the best movies — are generally disappointing. The Star Wars and Indiana Jones games from LucasArts stand out as the only exceptions, and even that noble group includes some less-than-stellar entries (this is where everybody nods and says *"Rebel Assault"*).

So what happens when you base a game on a *bad* movie? You've got two strikes against you, as MicroProse's *Star Trek: Generations* proves.

The plot of the seventh Star Trek movie was aimless and needlessly convoluted, and so is the game based on it. The movie was crowded with unnecessary characters, and so is the game. The movie set our teeth on edge with embarrassingly unfunny quips from Mr. Data, whose emotion chip was giving him fits — and so does the game.

When the *Generations* game went into development, it should've been no secret that the movie had some real problems. And yet the game's developers managed to carry most of the film's bad points into the computerized version, while introducing several new problems that could only appear in a computer game.

In one of the away missions, Commander Worf has to go undercover in a Klingon spaceport.

In *Generations*, your goal hews pretty closely to the film. Playing as various Trek characters, you have to track down and stop Dr. Tolian Soran, the El-Aurian scientist whose attempts to achieve the ultimate high are resulting in the destruction of entire solar systems all over the galaxy. Most of the action takes place in 12 first-person "away missions" set on alien worlds and inside starships and space stations. But you'll also find yourself on the *Enterprise* bridge for some space combat, and in the ship's huge Stellar Cartography room, where you'll use your sensors and Data's big brain to find the elusive Soran. Eventually, even Captain Kirk and those annoying Klingon sisters, Lursa and B'etor, get into the act.

Generations is a cross between a 3D shooter like *Doom* and a first-person, real-time adventure like *System Shock*, but it's not nearly as successful in either area as those games were.

Generations doesn't work well as an adventure simply because its story is as meandering and cluttered as the movie's. In the theater, *Generations* was hard to follow; on the PC, it's downright illogical.

As a 3D shooter, *Generations* falls flat because there's simply not enough action, and there's never a sense that you're in any real danger. You're more likely to be hurt by environmental hazards like pits, radioactive rocks, poisonous air, or dangling electrical wires than by Klingons or Romulans with itchy disruptor fingers. And the game's 3D engine is sluggish and choppy even on a Pentium 166 with 32MB of memory, which kills the sense of speed and urgency essential to any action game.

Control is awkward, too. You get most of the options you'd have in a current 3D shooter — jump, crouch, run, sidestep, look up and down — but the layout is about as far from *Doom* or *Quake* as it could be. The sidestep keys (which let you slide to the left or right without turning — vital for peering around corners) are the slash and asterisk keys on the numeric keypad, which forces you to take your hand off the movement keys entirely. *Generations* lets you customize the controls up to a point, but you can't use a modifier key like "Alt" to sidestep with the cursor keys, so forget about configuring this game to play the way you play most other first-person shooters.

Graphically, *Generations* is no great shakes, either. This game was in development for years, and while the 3D engine may have been state-of-the-art when work began, it looks dated next to the likes of *Quake* or even *Duke Nukem 3D*. Enemies are depicted in two-dimensional bitmaps with very few frames of

Full-motion video taken from the film is used to good effect in *Generations*.

TRICORDER READINGS

In addition to a fully functioning phaser, *Generations* gives you a tricorder to play with, too. It's not the all-purpose problem-solving widget we know and love from the Trek TV shows and movies, but it makes a handy display for vital game information.

HEALTH WINDOW

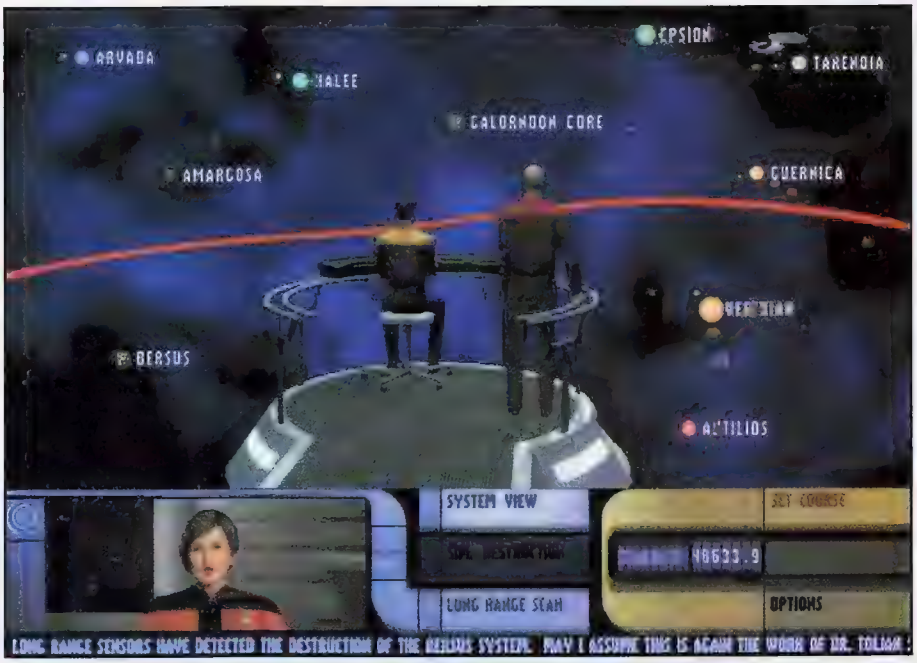
The green bar in the Health Window shows how much damage your character has taken. If it gets too low, the *Enterprise* will beam you to sickbay and you'll fail your mission. The blue bar is for your air supply (if you're using a breathing mask) or your armor (if you're wearing a spacesuit).

MISSION OBJECTIVES

The Mission Objectives Window reminds you of what you're supposed to be doing — useful when you become distracted by the cute critters on Bersus or the serpent worms in the Klingon cafeteria.

MAP WINDOW

The Map Window shows you where you are and where you've been — sometimes. It also displays any life forms, energy sources, or trilithium deposits it picks up.



The Stellar Cartography room makes a very handy between-missions interface. Here, Picard and Data get a message from one of those ever-present Starfleet admirals.

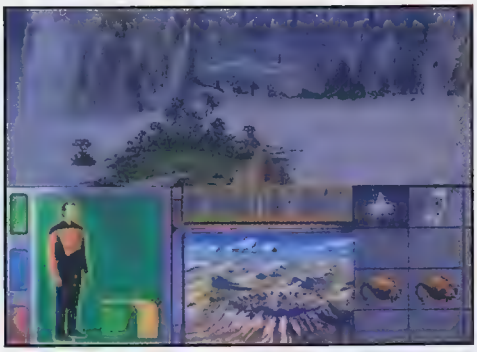
animation; it creates the impression of walking through a 3D world and shooting at cardboard cutouts of the bad guys. MicroProse must be aware of this problem, since they've licensed the *Unreal* engine for the next Trek-movie game, based on *First Contact*.

The onscreen interface creates another visual problem simply by taking up the entire bottom half of the screen; play *Generations* for any length of time, and you'll catch yourself craning forward, trying to peer over the edge of the interface. Ultimately, you'll probably keep your viewpoint angled down a couple of notches most of the time, just so you won't miss useful objects on the ground three feet in front of you.

Like most first-person shooters, *Generations* provides an automap function (disguised as a tricorder, of course) that helps you find your way through its maze-like maps. But this one doesn't always work well. In some areas — especially outdoors or in underground passages — the automap only displays your immediate surroundings. Passages you've already walked through disappear from the display as you leave them behind, making your map nearly worthless. You'd think in the 24th century they could make a tricorder with enough memory to hold a little 2D map.

Last — but definitely worst — is the way *Generations* handles saved games. You can save your game at any point in a mission, but don't be fooled. If you get killed or quit the game and restore that save later, you'll find yourself at the beginning of the mission again, regardless of how far you'd gotten when you saved. That means you've got to complete each mission in one sitting, whether you want to or not — screw up, and it's back to the start, increasing the frustration level exponentially. The last 3D shooter that worked this way was Atlantean's *Island Peril*, one of the worst, most slapped-together games we've ever reviewed — there's just no excuse for it in a game from MicroProse.

Generations doesn't do everything wrong. All the major players from the movie are on hand for voice-overs (Lursa and B'etor are played by a sound-alike, and only Whoopi Goldberg's Guinan is missing). Full-motion video footage from the film is used to good effect without dominating the game — there are even some shots that didn't appear in the movie. And while the Stellar Cartography room seemed to appear in the movie for the sole purpose of showing how much the "Next Generation" budget had increased with the move from small screen to big, the game turns it into a very nice interface for getting from one mission to the next.



Data doesn't need oxygen to live, but he's too heavy to float, so the crater lake on Bersus presents some unique problems.

And then there's the simple fact that every gamer who likes Trek has always wanted a game that lets you run around inside Trek-style ships, planets, and space stations with a phaser set to kill. *Generations* does that, which counts for something — but it doesn't do it very well.

— Dan Bennett

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

64%

HIGHS: Some Trek fans will enjoy playing as crew; good use of film footage.

LOWS: Virtually worthless save-game feature; awkward controls; all the problems of the movie.

BOTTOM LINE: Pass this one up, unless you're an absolutely rabid Trek fan.

There's only one thing more torturous than playing Deathtrap Dungeon.

IAN LIVINGSTONE'S

DEATHTRAP Dungeon

"Beat me. Whip me. Just don't hit that Quit button." Consider it your battle cry. Then bring on the skeletal warriors, zombies and countless other undead denizens. Each one is another chance to slice and dice like a Ginsu® knife gone bad. Or simply cast a spell

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on the evil priestess who's done you wrong. Because in this cavernous maze of devious traps, it's all about cheating death at every turn, blurring that fine line between pleasure and pain. And just when you think you can't take it anymore, consider the alternative.

PC CD

PlayStation

EIDOS INTERACTIVE

You've been warned.

Product Information Number 132

Jack Nicklaus 4

Win95

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

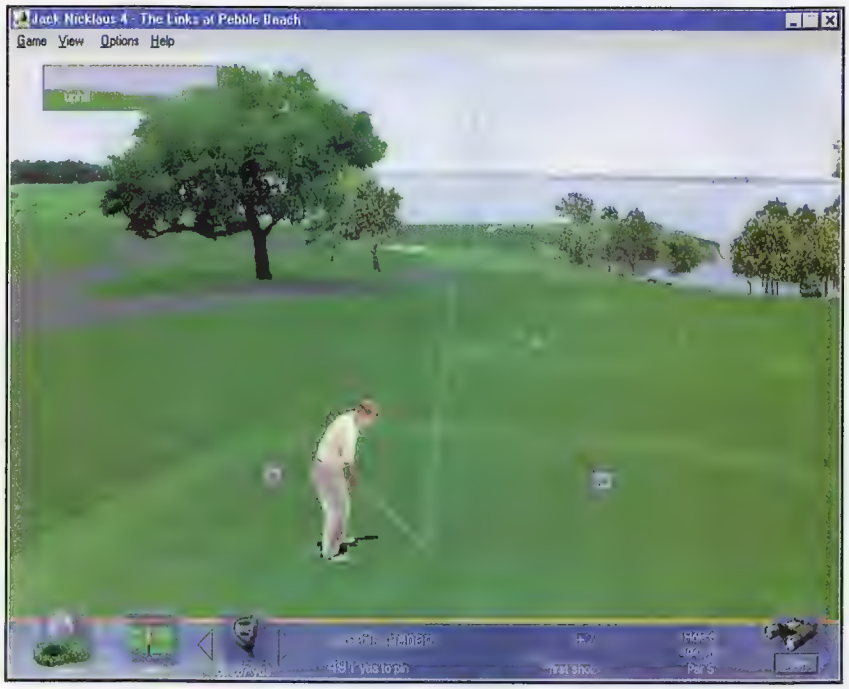
Category: Sports Simulation

Developer: Accolade

Publisher: Accolade, 5300 Stevens Creek Blvd., #500, San Jose CA 95129 (415) 985-1700

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; SVGA graphics	Pentium 133; 24MB RAM

The Golden Bear's latest pitch into computer games is an instant champion.



The most apparent change in *Jack Nicklaus 4* is the graphics. Shown here at 800x600, the game looks almost as good as the graphics king, *Links LS*.

Though Accolade's Jack Nicklaus series has tried hard to join the clubhouse along with the computer golf elite, the series has always been lost in the shadow of Access' seemingly unstoppable Links dynasty. But with the fourth title in the series, Accolade proves it's ready to close the gap once and for all with its most solid golf offering to date. *Jack Nicklaus 4* is a glorious golfing feast from tee to green, offering gorgeous graphics, first-rate sound, realistic play, and multi-player competition. Besides a superb golf simulation, *JN4* boasts its namesake's specialty, with a brilliant course designer that lets you build the golf course of your dreams.

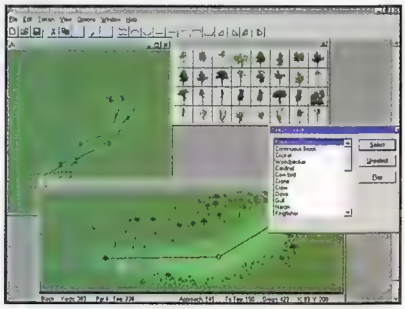
While Accolade's JN series has always distinguished itself with a course designer, the play's the thing, and in previous incarnations the gameplay just wasn't up to par. Who wants to work for weeks designing an 18-hole masterpiece, only to find out that the golf itself isn't all that it could be? That's where *JN4* has worked hard to improve its game, and the results are a stunning success.

The view from the landing area shows the outcome of another brilliant shot on a picturesque par 3 at Winding Springs.

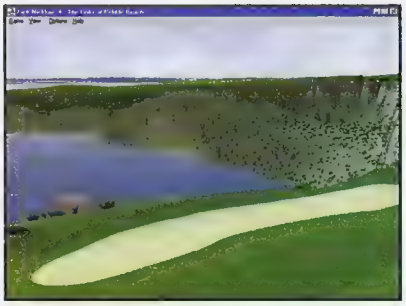
Imagine, if you will, *Links LS* with a course designer built in. Are the graphics in *Jack Nicklaus* as good as *Links LS*? Not exactly. But *JN4* comes darn close, and with a powerful course designer thrown in, that's plenty good enough. *JN4* isn't *Links*, but *Links* ain't *JN4*, either. The real dilemma for die-hard golf fans will be finding room on the hard drive for two great golf simulations.

JN4 has plenty of aural delights to go along with the lovely graphics. The sound effects are the best you'll find in any golf game, from the satisfying whoosh of the tee shot to the painful kerplunk of the ball going in the drink. The ambient sounds add to the experience without getting in the way, except maybe for the caddie's chatter, which fortunately can be turned off.

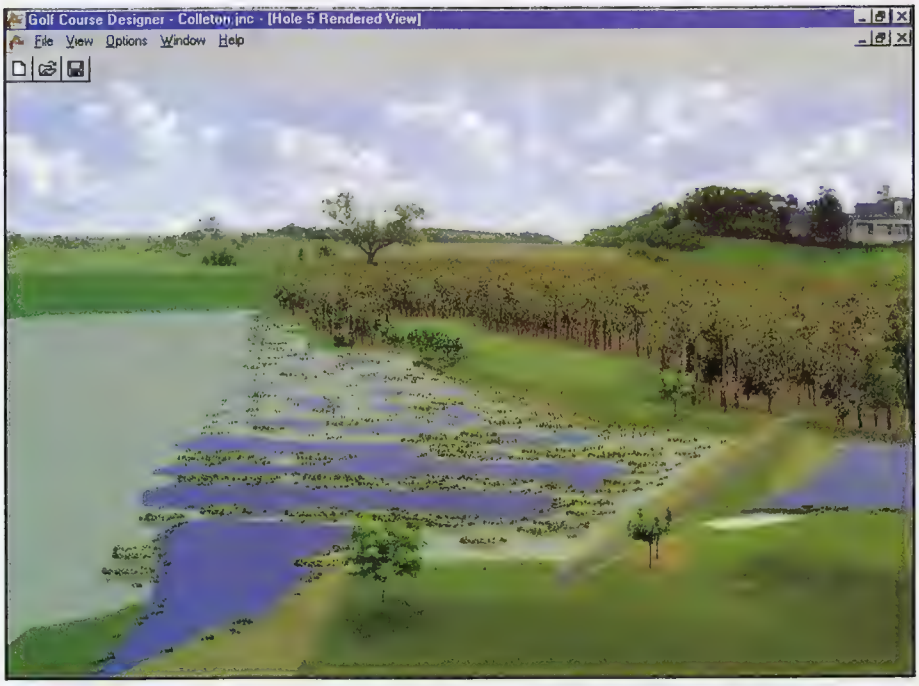
The main perspective is uncluttered, though you can call up a small box to show elevation changes. An optional snap-around view gives you a TV-like shot of the landing area after every shot.



You'll find all the tools you need to become the next Pete Dye, including large libraries of trees, shrubs, and other objects.



You can download the Pebble Beach golf course from many free sources online.



The course designer allows you to survey your handiwork from any angle, and from various heights.

The swing meter uses the familiar click-click-click technique but *JN4* requires more than precise mousework on tell-tale hash-marks to win the day. There are no tick marks to show precise percentages for swing strength, resulting in trickier — and more realistic — shot selection and swings.

There are several modes of play, including skins. And if you want a computer partner, Jack himself is waiting to tee it up with you. The game comes with three Nicklaus-designed courses, Muirfield Village, Colleton Plantation, and Caba del Sol, along with a fantasy course, Winding Springs. The courses are lush and lovely, offering a nice mix of seaside, desert, and woodland. These courses, though, are only the beginning of golf with Jack. The heart of Accolade's golf sim, of course, has long been the course designer, and the new *Jack* does not disappoint.

The new course designer is magnificent, giving you all the tools necessary to take a vacant slab of land and transform it into a remarkably detailed golf course, down to each shrub and vale. Elevation tools let you create gentle slopes, sheer cliffs, deep bunkers, and just about any other terrain you can imagine. When you've sculpted the hole's terrain and elevation, add shrubs, trees, rocks, and other objects to bring the course to life. A clever sizing tool lets you change an object's size by a variable percentage, allowing you to plant a forest of trees and maintain a natural look.

The excellent sound effects are many and easy to place. Choose whether you want a crow or a mockingbird nesting beside the No. 2 tee. Add life to your new creek with the sound of running water. At anytime during course design, you can take a look at and listen to the hole, from any angle and from various heights. That's when the real magic of this game hits you, when you step back to survey your creation in all its glory.

There's very little to complain about, though I did find the game a bit too easy at times. I shot 71 at Muirfield in my very first outing — a few practice swings, toughest difficulty, black tees, no mulligans, and no gimmies. I then downloaded Augusta National and promptly fired a 66. The penalty for inaccuracy is greater for longer shots, as it should be. Miss with the driver and you're likely to be deep in the woods — or worse. For short iron shots, the game is much more forgiving, perhaps to a fault. Missing the mark badly during the swing just doesn't produce the disastrous results that it should at the toughest difficulty level. I mis-hit a wedge badly — clicking at the extreme range of the arc — and the ball veers just 15 feet right of the cup, pin high. Call me a masochist, but I want to be punished more for such a terrible swing. Putting is a different story. Unlike *Links*, where I seem to rattle in two or three monster putts every round, mastering the blade is the real challenge of golf in *Nicklaus*. Reading greens for speed and break is very difficult, and that's just the way I like it. If *JN4* is too forgiving on approach shots, there's plenty of punishment waiting on and around the greens.

With its superb play and unmatched course designer, *Jack Nicklaus 4* stands as a remarkable achievement. You won't find a better way to spend your golf sim dollars.

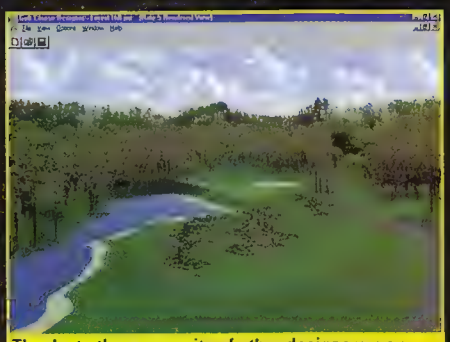
— Lee Buchanan

USER-CREATED COURSES

If you're struggling to create your links masterpiece, take heart: There are plenty of people out there who are much better at course design than you are.

There's a gold mine of outstanding golf courses waiting online, both real and imagined, available for free download at several Web sites (try *jack4.golfweb.com* first). You'll find Augusta National, Pinehurst, and Pebble Beach, along with some excellent original designs. The best of them are arguably better than the courses included with the game. The courses are big — five to seven megabytes — but most are well worth the download time. And if you enjoy playing someone's course, drop them a line to say thanks, and you just may find yourself with a new golf partner.

If you already have a library of courses for Signature Edition, *JN4* does allow you to upgrade courses created with the older Signature Edition. The conversion builds the new terrain nicely, but you have to plant trees, shrubs, and other objects yourself.



Thanks to the generosity of other designers, you can download many user-created courses from various Web sites. This excellent fantasy course, called Forest Hill, was designed by Ken McHale.

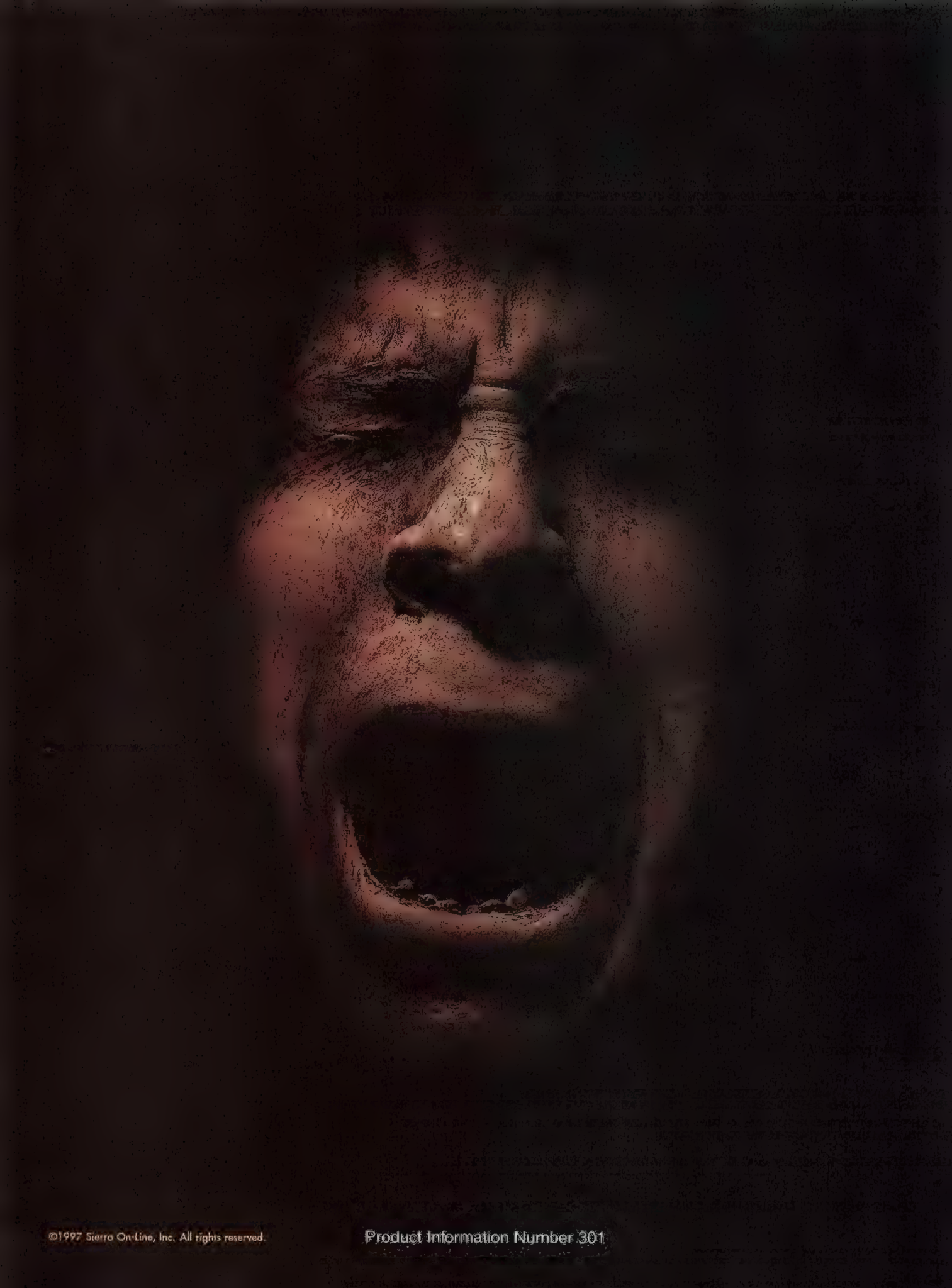
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

89%

HIGHS: Much-improved graphics; superb play; marvelous course designer; your chance to play with the Golden Bear.

LOWS: Some aspects of play are too easy.

BOTTOM LINE: Required equipment for computer golfers.



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Product Information Number 301

In the beginning, there was the end.

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Might and Magic
SECRET OF THE INNER SANCTUM

COMPUTER ROLE PLAYING GAME OF THE YEAR - 1986

Might and Magic II
GATES TO ANOTHER WORLD

COMPUTER ROLE PLAYING GAME OF THE YEAR - 1988

Might and Magic III
ISLES OF TERRA

COMPUTER ROLE PLAYING GAME OF THE YEAR - 1991

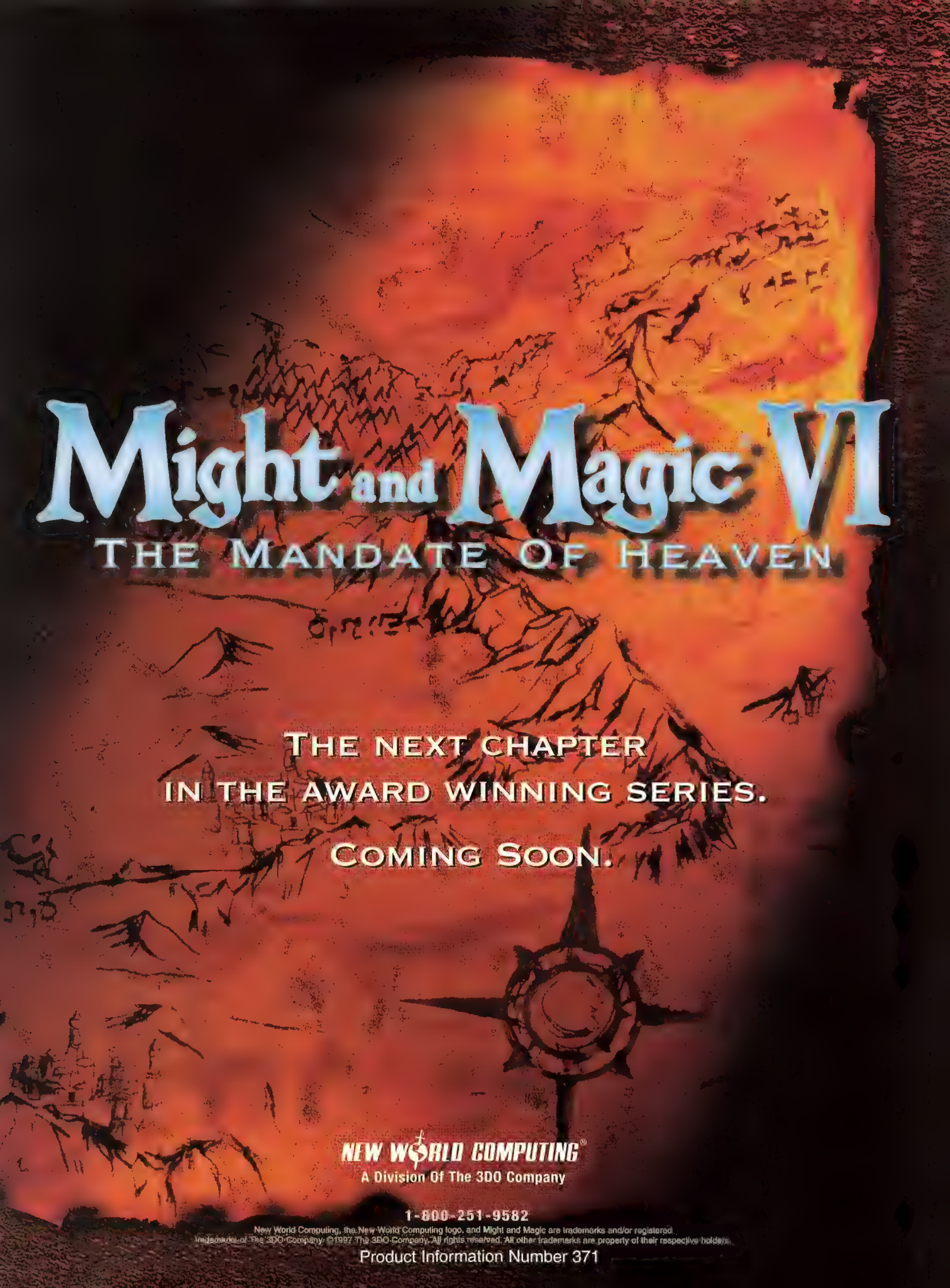
Might and Magic IV
CLOUDS OF XEEN

COMPUTER ROLE PLAYING GAME OF THE YEAR - 1992

Might and Magic V
DARKSIDE OF XEEN

COMPUTER ROLE PLAYING GAME OF THE YEAR - 1993

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB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Product Information Number 371

Triple Play 98

Win95

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Sports

Developer: EA Sports

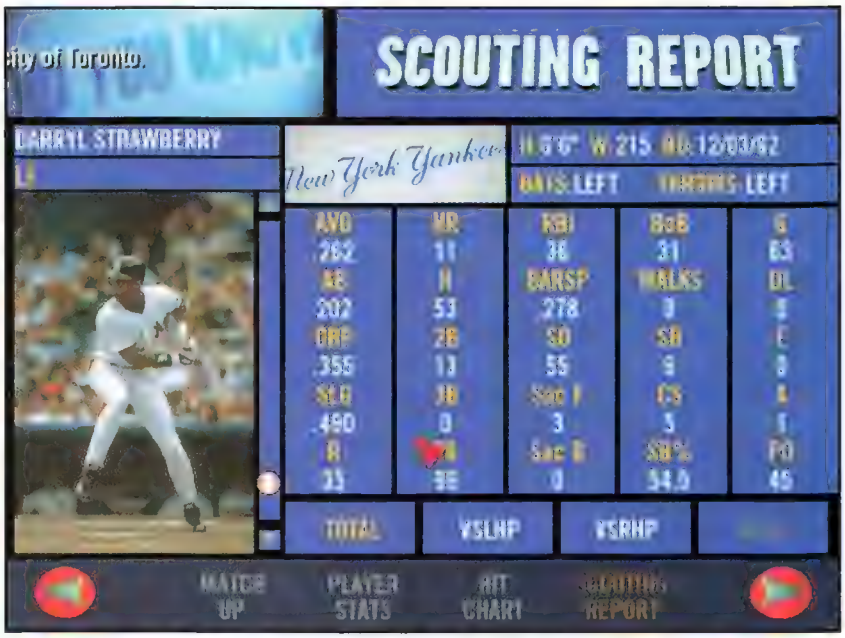
Publisher: Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 571-7171

Required	We Recommend
Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 166; 100MB hard-drive space; gamepad

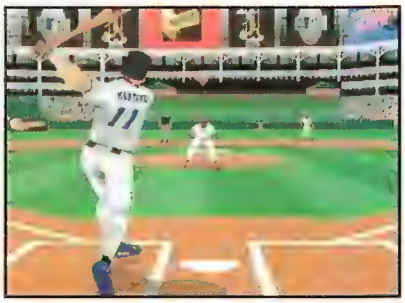
EA Sports' "Ultimate Judge" returns with a whole slew of new features and enhancements.

In a remarkably short time, Electronic Arts has managed to secure a convincing monopoly over the PC sports gaming market — the EA Sports brand boasts the best soccer game (*FIFA 97*), the best hockey game (*NHL 97*), the best hoops sim (*NBA Live 97*), and one of the better football games (*Madden NFL 97*) — and the forthcoming *PGA Tour Pro* looks like it could well unseat the all-conquering *Links LS* in the golf market, too. But of all of EA's winning sports sims, the personal favorite around the *PC Gamer* office has to be *Triple Play 97*, the all-action baseball game that had every one of us glued to our machines in fierce inter-office competition all last summer. Our runner-up for Sports Game Of The Year in 1996 (only *Links LS* beat it out), *Triple Play* had everything a baseball gamer could want — well, almost. A few things were missing or irritated us slightly, but now *Triple Play 98* has arrived to deliver a timely upgrade on a great game.

In accordance with EA Sports' now-familiar policy of not fixing what ain't broke, *Triple Play 98* doesn't rewrite the book — in fact, it's remarkably similar to the original. The basic gameplay, presentation style, and overall approach remain much the same, which is good because we had no problems with any of those primary aspects of *Triple Play 97*. But the technology has been given a revamp, a few niggles have been cleaned up, and some important new features have been added in response to user criticism of the 97 edition. So, where to start? Well, the first thing you'll notice when you take to the field is the new graphics technology — the sprite-based players of *Triple Play 97* have been replaced with more complex polygonal characters. This is a tough one to call — some of us think the new player graphics look a little clunkier and less clean than the old sprites, but no one can deny that the animation has improved greatly. Players pitch, dive, throw, swing, and slide with much more realism and variety than before, and there are some great "color" animations, like the infielders idly kicking the sand around their feet or the pitcher checking the baserunners, which add much to the atmosphere and feeling of "being there."



Triple Play 98 **now comes loaded with plenty of stats for all the MLB players, plus the option to edit them and create your own sports heroes from scratch.**



The player animations are, for the most part, much more impressive, with a greater variety of motion-captured moves on display.

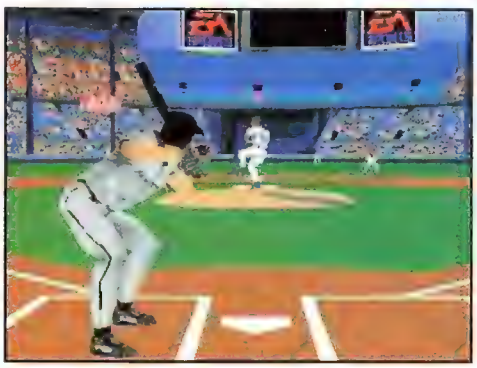
IT'S IN THE GAME — AND SO ARE YOU!

An exceptionally neat new feature of *Triple Play 98* is the Create Player feature, which allows gamers to build their own baseball heroes from scratch — and see the changes they make applied right before their eyes. Starting with a basic polygonal player, you can change weight, height, skin color, facial hairstyles, swinging style, strengths, weaknesses, glove color, left and right handedness... just about anything you could think of. If you've always wanted to lead off for the San Francisco Giants, just type in your own name to see it emblazoned across the back of the player's jersey. Now that's what I call fantasy baseball!

Dynamic scenes like this are common in *Triple Play 98*, and you can play them back to your heart's content with the instant replay feature.

Some of the dives, slides, and catches at the wall are absolutely breathtaking; the only lame duck amongst the new animations is the basic running — after hitting a homer, the batter seems to waddle awkwardly rather than jog confidently around the bases.

Perhaps more important to real baseball fans than the glossier graphics is the new statistical coverage. *Triple Play 97* was a great arcade baseball game, but it came under a lot of fire for its shallow stats. The 98 edition fixes this with reams of scouting reports, hit charts, percentages, and averages for everything a baseball fan could want. Every MLB player is here, fully editable and tradable. For an added realism bonus, the soon-to-be-added expansion teams, the Arizona Diamond Backs and the Tampa Bay Devil Rays are also included, with their team rosters filled by a manual or automatic fantasy draft. Most importantly, EA's trademark sumptuous presentation makes all these complex charts and stats easy to access and understand, so it might even encourage arcade-only fans to delve into the more statistical side of the game.



Depending on what kind of game you're playing, the crowd levels differ — an exhibition game will show lots of empty seats, but a playoff game will have the stadium packed to the rafters.

Talking of presentation, the dial has been turned up here, too. The new two-man color commentary (Jim Hughson is now joined by the ever-chatty Buck Martinez) brings a rich, TV-style atmosphere to the game, as does the optional TV camera perspective and the awe-inspiring rendered stadium intros, each complete with their own rendition of the national anthem. It's difficult to imagine anything that anybody but the most obsessive baseball fan would want to customize but couldn't in *Triple Play 98* — there are just so many user-friendly options, it's easy to set up the game exactly how you want it. Multi-player options abound, too, with network and modem play and Gravis GrIP support.

All 28 major league ballparks are here, and you can take a swift multimedia tour of each with this new preview feature.

The TV camera view switches to behind the pitcher's mound to give the game a "sports bar" feel — but it's harder to bat from this perspective.

Die-hard baseball fans may still want to check out the even deeper stats of *Sierra's Front Page Sports Baseball '98*, but for my money, *Triple Play 98* is undoubtedly the best way to play baseball on your PC — no other game even comes close to capturing the sights, the sounds, and the atmosphere of a sunny afternoon at a major league ballpark as much as EA's offering. Casual gamers who already own *Triple Play 97* may want to think twice before shelling out an additional $50 for this, since the basic core of the game is much the same, but for die-hard lovers of the original, or anyone just out to get the maximum bang for their baseball buck, this is absolutely the best bet out there.

— Gary Whitta

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

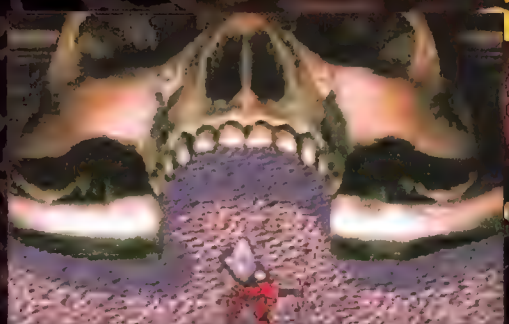
92%

HIGHS: Awesome atmosphere; fast, instinctive play; oodles of options.

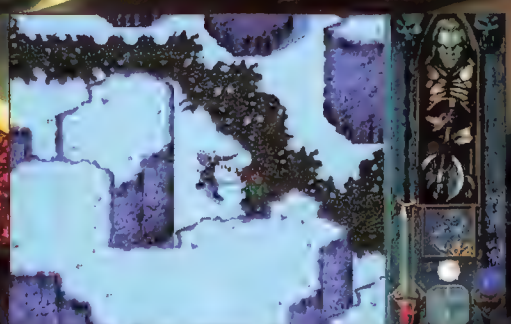
LOWS: Requires a monster machine and a monster install for peak performance of the game.

BOTTOM LINE: Baseball on the PC doesn't get any more fun than this. Unreservedly recommended.

Reven



Gory Combat Action: Brimming with 170 horrifying enemies and 21 demented spells — each with a unique bloody graphic.



Epic Production: A staggering 100,000-plus screens and 120 hours of blood-spraying adventure enhanced with 25 grisly minutes of full-motion, 3-D animation.

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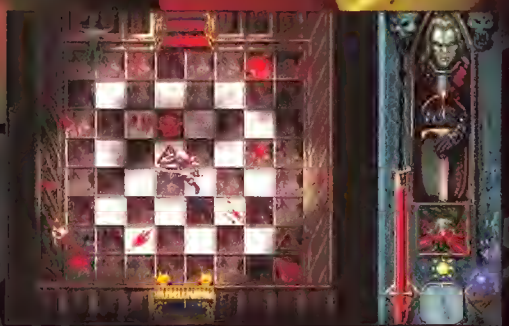

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Product Information Number 84

Enemy Nations

Win95

Category:	Real-time strategy
Developer:	Windward
Publisher:	Head Games, P.O. Box 2698, Reston, VA (612) 321-9470

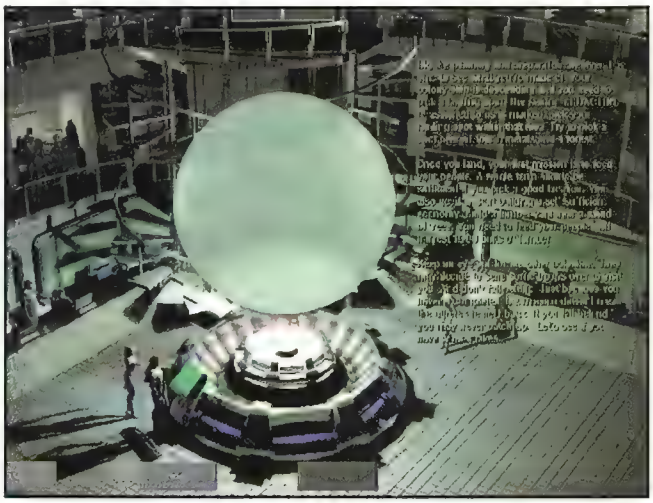
Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 60MB hard-drive space; Mouse	Pentium 100; 16MB RAM; 2MB VRAM Super VGA card

A dash of *SimCity*, a hint of *Civilization*, and a bit of *Command & Conquer* yields a fun home-brewed strategy game.

Enemy Nations has been a software football since a small group of independent developers began work on it three years ago. Kicked from Mindscape to Viacom to Virgin and finally dropped in the laps of cheapjack publisher Head Games (*Aftershock for Quake, Terry Bradshaw Fantasy Football*), it has been the unfortunate victim of fate and fickle corporations.

It deserved better. Dave Thielen and his crew at Windward have crafted a labor of love that should please every fan of world building and science-fiction strategy games. *Enemy Nations* takes the good parts of *Civilization, SimCity, Command & Conquer,* and a small dash of *Master of Orion,* mixes them together with excellent head-to-head play and decent AI, and comes up with a surefire hit.

Enemy Nations sets you down on an uninhabited planet along with a number of other races, and challenges you to build a colony that will dominate the landscape. You can jump into a world set to custom parameters, or ease into gameplay with a terrific multi-part tutorial game with specific goals to introduce game concepts. The number of opponents on the planet, level of difficulty, your own race, and the size of the planet can all be customized. The twelve races all have the same basic buildings and units, but feature different skills (such as good production but poor combat ratings).



A long tutorial introduces complex game elements by doling out specific mission goals.

As a colony grows, it spreads and develops a wider road network to gain access to vital raw materials. Your neighbors will want those same materials.

The planet surface comes complete with trees, bodies of water, and coal, oil, iron, and xilithium deposits. Each player starts with a rocket filled with a set amount of supplies, two trucks, and a crane for building structures. After setting the rocket down in an area with a good mix of minerals and a defensible perimeter, you begin harvesting trees, producing food, and building a colony from scratch by placing different kinds of mines, factories, buildings, offices, houses, and other essential structures.

The interface for interacting with all this is fairly good. Information about colonists, resources, and power are always on screen, and giving orders or finding buildings is fairly easy to do. The map is rendered in high-res detail and can be fully rotated and zoomed to view buildings and units from any direction or height. Unfortunately, the color palette is a little mushy, and units often blend into the background and become hard to see. Infantry units in particular are poorly rendered. On the positive side, building and explosion graphics are top-notch.

Research is just complex enough to keep things interesting, as you try to find just the right balance between increasing the effectiveness of your units and that of your structures. Minerals become

RESEARCHING WAR

The research tree in *Enemy Nations* is complex enough to keep things interesting and add significantly to strategy, but not so complex that you'll get bogged down in its interrelationship. You may think going after bigger and better guns is the key to winning, but in fact a well balanced research agenda mixing resources, construction, power, and manufacturing is crucial. Here are a few of the critical offensive and defensive weapons research stages, with my thanks to Keith Francis and his excellent *EN* page at *http://www.digitaldallas.net/en/*.

Armor: Sandwiched Steel, Titanium, and Durellium
Each of these research stages includes the defensive properties of all new units.

Artillery
Allows for units capable of indirect fire.

Enriched Shells
Increases the overall firepower of units.

Fuel Air Explosives
A potent offensive weapon.

HE Shells
Shells have more explosive power.

Improved Gunpowder
Shells fire further.

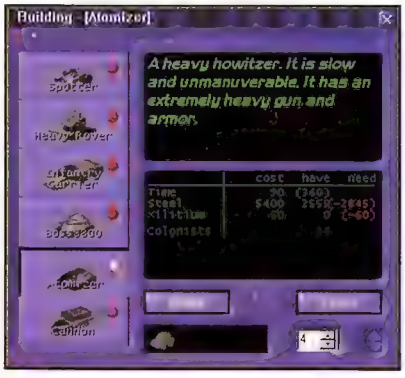
Larger Barrels
Bigger barrels for all new weapons.

Tanks
Allows for turreted vehicles and better guns.

Turbo Ignitors
Large jump in the range of weapons.

more crucial just as they get harder to find, and while the AI isn't aggressive enough to make the enemy an ever-present threat, waging war is an important issue throughout the game. The AI tends to follow a "blitz" pattern by hitting you with a nuisance strike early and then backing off rapidly. The game then settles into a period of build-up and expansion that leads to skirmishes and finally, *Civilization*-style annihilations.

Combat is handled well, with a diverse mix of weapons, weapon levels, and fortifications to make both offense and defense tactically interesting. The model is straight *Command & Conquer* real-time movement and fighting. Unit groupings can be assigned to the number keys for easy squad deployments. Unit AI is pretty effective: they take some initiative and don't just sit there waiting to be attacked. Aside from the aforementioned spotty unit graphics, this element of *EN* is as strong as any real-time combat around.



As you research new technologies and buildings, more weapons become available for construction.

A beginning colony links crucial buildings to the "mothership" with a network of roads. Be sure to build embassies so you can form alliances.

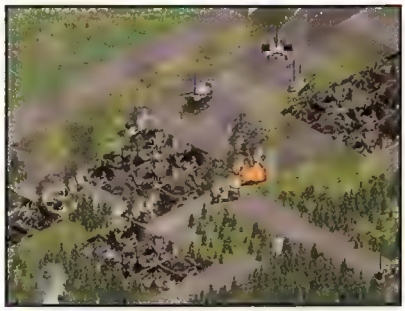
Enemy Nations really shines in multi-player mode. It works smoothly over LAN and the Internet, and has been tested with up to 15 players. More are possible, though map size would ultimately limit this. An innovate twist was tying multi-player elements such as forming alliances and even direct communication with other players to enhance technological progress. You need to build and research embassies to forge diplomatic relations, and research E-mail to enable fast communications. Head-to-head play is slick and satisfying; you can even save and restart games in progress, making it one of the best strategy games available for 'net play.

But there are things that drag *Enemy Nations'* overall score down. Messages are shouted (often in a little girl's voice, which is a little *too* weird) saying I'm out of a mineral, but never telling me where or what. These messages disappear fast and you can't call them back up. In the midst of managing a growing colony, this gets frustrating. It might not have been such a problem if there were some better way of tracking production and raw materials. I'm a charts-and-tables kinda gamer, and *Enemy Nations* would have benefited immensely from simply providing more depth of information on the world and the resources.

A world this complex is bound to have some bumps in it. Since you can manually route trucks to carry materials to and from any destination, the transportation model is obviously quite complex. If too many trucks are in one location, a bottleneck can develop and the whole thing grinds to a halt. Game load times can be long, and a sizable piece of empty hard drive space is needed to load the world. The overview map of the world is poorly detailed and not very useful.

But the positives far outweigh the negatives. A simple colony soon becomes a buzzing city, and *SimCity*-like handling of traffic and roads becomes an issue. Finding new resources and new places to expand calls to mind the best world conquest games, while sending armies to engage in real-time combat mines the current trend towards faster-paced strategy titles. There's a little bit of everything here, but all of it is well-balanced and well-integrated: it never overwhelms. This is a system that deserves to be around for some time to come, and I hope its troubled past doesn't hold it back: we need more games like this.

— T. Liam McDonald



This fleet of destroyers does it job by wiping out an enemy colony.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

86%

HIGHS: Solid core gameplay; good balance of elements; lots of replay value.

LOWS: Gameplay glitches; poor memory management. Needs better way of presenting resource information.

BOTTOM LINE: Entertaining; just the right balance of construction, research, resources, and combat.

Product Information Number 353

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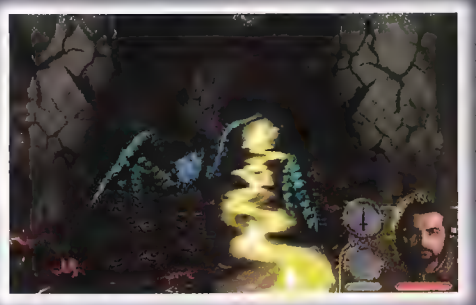

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FPS: Golf

Win95

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Sports

Developer: Sierra

Publisher: Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E. Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 60; 16MB RAM; 25MB free hard-drive space; Mouse	Pentium 90 or higher; 32MB RAM; Supported sound card; 65MB free hard-drive space

Sierra swings into the golfing world with a hitting style that will change the way you play golf.

With all the golf simulations on the market today, computer duffers are experiencing an abundance of riches on an unprecedented scale, where countless lush courses are recreated to the smallest detail and players are given ever increasing amounts of realistic control. Yet despite the vast advances and constant push for better and more detailed courses, the abstract swing-meter control interface, which first showed up on classics such as *Mean 18* and *Leaderboard*, still severs the symbiotic link between player and course. Players are forced to plan their shots with three well-timed mouse clicks, which seemingly have little to do with the finesse and physical nature of real golf.

But Sierra may have an answer for this dilemma. For its first golf offering, *Front Page Sports: Golf*, Sierra has created a revolutionary and natural swing interface that makes playing golf on the PC more like a day on the links.

Scully won't have any problems making this long putt thanks to the putting grid (which can be turned off) and the aiming arrow.

After years of triple-clicking on a swing meter or bar, Sierra's Interactive TrueSwing acts much in the same way as the intuitive mouse control from Interplay's *Virtual Pool*, allowing you to hit the ball by physically moving your mouse to determine speed, fade, and draw. It's a three-step process: left-click on your beautiful 3D-rendered golfer, pull back on the mouse, and push forward to hit the ball. You can draw shots by moving the mouse slightly to the left as you push forward or fade shots by pushing forward to the right. If you want to hit the ball harder, pull the mouse back farther and push forward faster. For a softer shot, do the opposite. It's just that simple.

The beauty of using the TrueSwing is your ability to watch your swing the whole time. Other golf games require you to watch the swing meter while hitting, so you don't get to watch your swing. The TrueSwing forces you to watch your swing the whole time, which is a more intuitive and realistic way to play golf. It feels less like playing golf on a computer and more like *playing golf*.

No. 14 at Coeur d'Alene (a *great* add-on course) is a beautiful, yet unforgiving hole. You *have* to hit it onto the floating green to move on. You also have to worry about the sand traps that surround the green.

The scenary is beautiful until you get up close to the trees, which are pretty pixelated.

Another advantage of this new hitting style is the ability to customize your swing. For each player you create, you calibrate your swing according to how you want to use your mouse. You get to calibrate drives, chips, and putts by picking an amount of swing power and then hitting practice balls to determine an average hitting distance. It's a little tricky at first, but with a little work, you really can customize your swing to your liking. If you find that you are consistently hitting too hard or too soft while out on the course, you can recalibrate your swing.

If you master the TrueSwing, you will shun the old swing meter forever. The problem becomes mastering this new technique. Like in real life, swinging this

The TrueSwing

HOW TO MASTER IT

Sierra's new hitting style may be more realistic, but it's also harder to get used to. Here are some tips to help you through the rough beginning:

- **Don't hold down the mouse button while swinging. It's much easier to concentrate on your swing when you don't have to worry about holding the mouse button.**
- **Set up two boxes (or anything else with straight edges) on either side of your mouse to use as guides. Or place your mouse near the edge of your mouse pad and run your pinkie finger along the side of the mouse pad. Either way will help you hit the ball spot on.**
- **Play with mulligans on. If at first you don't succeed, cheat...**

These tips won't guarantee you will hit straight ever time, but they will keep you from giving up in frustration. The TrueSwing is tough to master, but once you do, you'll never go back to the ol' swing meter.

The scenery for all of *FPS: Golf* 's courses are beautifully rendered with 3D graphics.

You can view your golf shot from one of five set angles, all of which can be open at once. But it would be nice to have a view that lets you watch your ball land.

virtual club at a tiny white ball is a tough skill to learn. Hitting a straight shot seems almost impossible at first. Your shots will vary radically, and it's even possible to miss the ball completely (just another example of how realistic the TrueSwing is). With practice — and quite a few mulligans — you'll be hitting drives, chips, and putts pretty accurately. But, just like in real life, it's easy to miss hit a shot if you aren't paying attention. Concentration is the key. Computer golf is no longer a matter of memorizing a pattern of clicks.

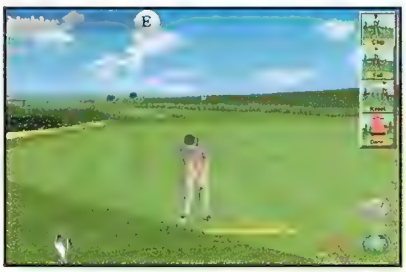
Once you get the hang of the TrueSwing, the big question becomes: How is the golf in *FPS: Golf*? Answer: It's good. Two courses come with the game. The Pete Dye Golf Club in Bridgeport, West Virginia, is where you'll want to start. The course is beautiful to look at, and it's open enough to allow for some mis-hits. Once you feel confident with your TrueSwing hitting, play a round on the Prince Course in Kauai, Hawaii. This is a tough, unforgiving course where accuracy, patience, and straight-hitting are key. You'll want mulligans turned on when playing here.

No matter which course you play, you'll love the scenery. The courses are all beautifully rendered with 3D graphics that redraw quickly between shots (if you've got the recommended hardware or better, of course). You can view these lush sceneries from one of five different views, all of which can be displayed at the same time. Unfortunately, one view you can't get is that of the ball landing — unless it happens to land in one of the set views. But the flight physics and ball movements are some of the most accurate models on the market today. *FPS: Golf* sinks yet another birdie for realism.

FPS: Golf has three more features that make playing fun. First, player characteristics. You can choose your name and gender, of course, but you also get to choose the color of your player's hair, skin, shirt, and pants. Second, game choices. You can play 12 different types of golf, including skins, four-ball, and Ryder Cup. Third, multiplay. *FPS: Golf* lets you play over a LAN, network, and the Internet. Sierra is even sponsoring free tournaments through its Internet Gaming System.

Sierra has dared to create a golf game that changes the rules. The revolutionary hitting style of *FPS: Golf*, coupled with the beautiful 3D-rendered graphics and the fun, yet tough courses, make this game one of the hottest golf sims on the market.

— *Dean H. Renninger*



FPS: Golf lets you adjust the angle of your stance with just a few simple clicks, or you can use one of the preset stances in the menu.

Where's the Swing Meter?

So you just can't get the hang of the Interactive TrueSwing, huh? Well, never fear. You can still play the *FPS: Golf* courses using the traditional triple-click method.

When setting up your character, just click on the Tri-Click box. Now you are ready to use the infamous colored meter to hit your ball. Click once to start your swing, click a second time to indicate the amount of power you want, and click a final time to set the lateral movement (draws and fades) of the ball. Of course, there are the usual marks on the meter that recommend the ideal spots for you to click on.

FPS: Golf does let you use the traditional swing meter, but it's not up to snuff with the current crop of golfing games.

Unfortunately, the *FPS: Golf* Tri-Click method isn't as sophisticated as the latest round of Links and Nicklaus games. There is only one meter format that you can use to hit, chip, and putt. This makes it mighty tough to gauge how hard you are hitting when chipping or putting. *Links LS* and *Jack Nicklaus 4* both have different meters for chipping and putting, which makes it easier and less frustrating to play a round of golf.

So *FPS: Golf* does let you use the old style of playing, but don't expect the experience to be as satisfying as the latest Links and Nicklaus games.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

90%

HIGHS: TrueSwing is intuitive and realistic; fun, tough courses; realistic ball movement.

LOWS: TrueSwing is tough to learn; pointless player commentary.

BOTTOM LINE: The truly revolutionary swing style makes *FPS: Golf* intuitive and fun.

AN EXPERIMENT IN CYBERDIVERSION:

CYBERDIVERSION THEORY SAYS IF WE SATISFY OUR PRIMAL VIOLENT URGES ON THE NET, WE WON'T HAVE TO HURT PEOPLE IN REALITY! WITH THE HEAT INTERNET GAME NETWORK, WE CAN TEST OUR THEORY ON THE MOST PRIMALLY VIOLENT SPECIMEN THE WORLD HAS TO OFFER! ...*HEAT™ IS THE ANSWER!!*

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OVER THERE AGAIN.

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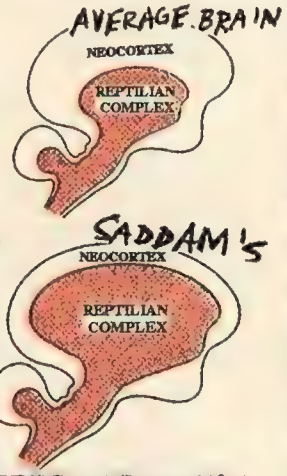


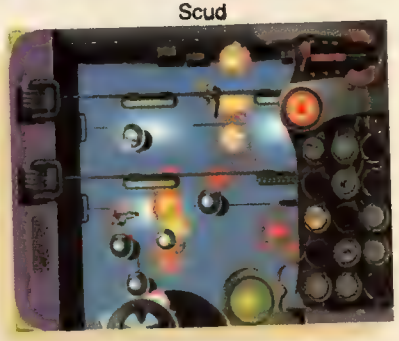
DEAR SADDAM, LIVES CAN BE SAVED IF YOU DIVERT YOUR PRIMAL AGGRESSIONS ONTO HEAT.NET NOW:

LOG ON TO HEAT.NET! BOOT UP YOUR FAVORITE MULTI-PLAYER CD-ROM! WITH HEAT, YOU CAN RULE THE WORLD WITHOUT SHEDDING AN OUNCE OF BLOOD OR LEAVING SO MUCH AS A BRUISE!!! ...*HEAT IS THE ANSWER!!*

Help Saddam divert his precious violent urges NOW with games like Scud™ and HEAT Warz,™ only on HEAT, or games like Blood™ and Quake™ that are already amongst the masses! (Just to be safe, we've made it possible for Saddam to play almost every multi-player PC game on HEAT!)

Blood

Scud



HELP SAVE THE WORLD!
COPY THIS FLYER AND SPREAD THE WORD!!!

DON'T JUST SIT THERE! HELP BROTHER SADDAM OVERCOME HIS WEAKNESS!!!

Get up NOW, log onto HEAT.NET, boot up your favorite multi-player CD-ROM game, and for FREE you can *JOIN THE MILLIONS HELPING TO KICK THAT CRAZY IRAQUI'S REPTILIAN RUMP!!* On HEAT.NET, you can chainsaw him in half, rip off his head, taunt him with dirty words in his native language-- the madder he gets, the more he'll play! Suddenly, he'll feel lighter, happier!

All the U.N. troops poised on his border, the Kurds, the defectors, none of them will matter! And you'll manage to achieve what hundreds of diplomats and thousands of tons of warheads failed to do: MAKE SADDAM CURB HIS AGGRESSIONS AND BRING PEACE TO THE MIDDLE EAST!!!

HEAT IS THE ANSWER!

❑ **YES!** I'd like to help avoid any more inconvenient bloody messes by taking my aggressive urges onto the HEAT internet game network! Please send me more info.

❑ **NO!** I'm a grumpy old genocidal dictator who enjoys indiscriminately butchering innocent women and children because mommy and daddy didn't give me enough attention when I was younger! Not today, please.

Name _____
Age _____ E-mail address _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
Phone number _____

PLEASE CLIP AND SEND TO THE CYBERDIVERSION INSTITUTE: 1453-A 14TH ST. SUITE 267 SANTA MONICA, CA 90404

HEAT.NET

Sentient

Category: Adventure/RPG

Developer: Psygnosis

Publisher: Psygnosis, 919 East Hillsdale Blvd., Foster City, CA 94404 (415) 655-5683

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; Supported sound card; 3D Blaster or Matrox Mystique; Windows 95

With dozens of characters and a retro text-based interface, can Psygnosis' intergalactic soap opera bring home the bacon?

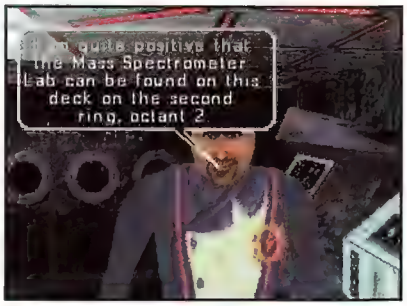
Every now and then, an ambitious product will cross our desks that contains a great concept, but turns out to be so damned screwy that it's barely playable. Examples of such innovative yet ultimately flawed products include *Robinson's Requiem*, *Battlecruiser 3000AD*, and now *Sentient* — games that would provide gameplay as deep as the ocean if any of us could figure out what in the hell was going on.

It's the far future, after an assumed exodus from the planet Earth. Some clever scientist made the revelation that sub-atomic particles named "Kenyons" can be taken from stars and transformed into energy sources. The star Xexor is the stellar gas tank for the ICARUS, the rotating space hulk that serves as the setting for our story. Don't bother searching for zany Ferengi bartenders or shape-shifting security officers — the only people you'll find on the ICARUS are grizzled nobodies who are always whining about the air conditioning or how they can't find their radiation reports.

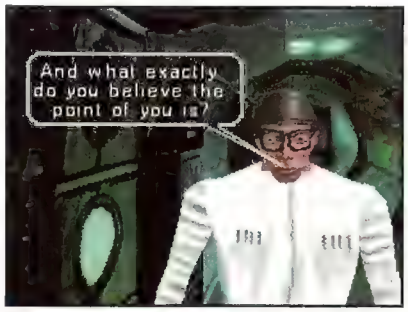
You're a medic named Garrit, the victim of a shuttlecraft crash into this sun-harvesting space colony. Your first goal is to work your way out of an irradiated shuttle dock. After narrowly escaping and saving the life of a dying engineer, you arrive on a security deck, where your adventure begins. From here, you can begin one of six multiple paths through the game — each of which results in a different conclusion. You'll discover that the ICARUS is on a collision course with the sun, the Congressional higher-up on board is being stalked by an assassin, there's a mutiny in the works, and plenty of other subplots that will keep you busy. So, do you save your own bacon? Do you work to save the ship as a whole?

After a few minutes of this graceless game, you may find yourself scrambling for the uninstall program instead. *Sentient* is huge and complex, but the interface and the snail-like pacing of the gameplay crush any enjoyment that you might derive from this title.

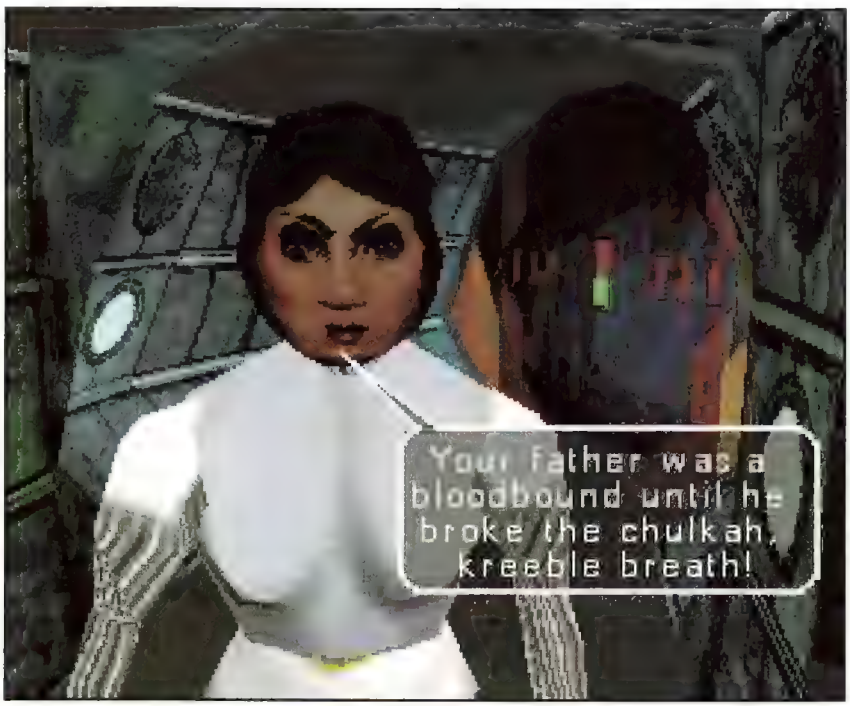
Simply stated, the interface is a chore. The mouse control is floaty, and the menu system is entirely text-based (though fans of the old-school Infocom text adventures may find this to be a pleasant throwback). In most adventure games, you questions or make statements by clicking on a question-mark icon and letting the program do the talking. But in *Sentient*, you have to putter through a phrase database that may or may not get you the information that you need. Hundreds — possibly thousands — of statements, questions, and requests can be created from the



Thanks for the info, big guy. Some people will give out very useful information, confusing as it may be.

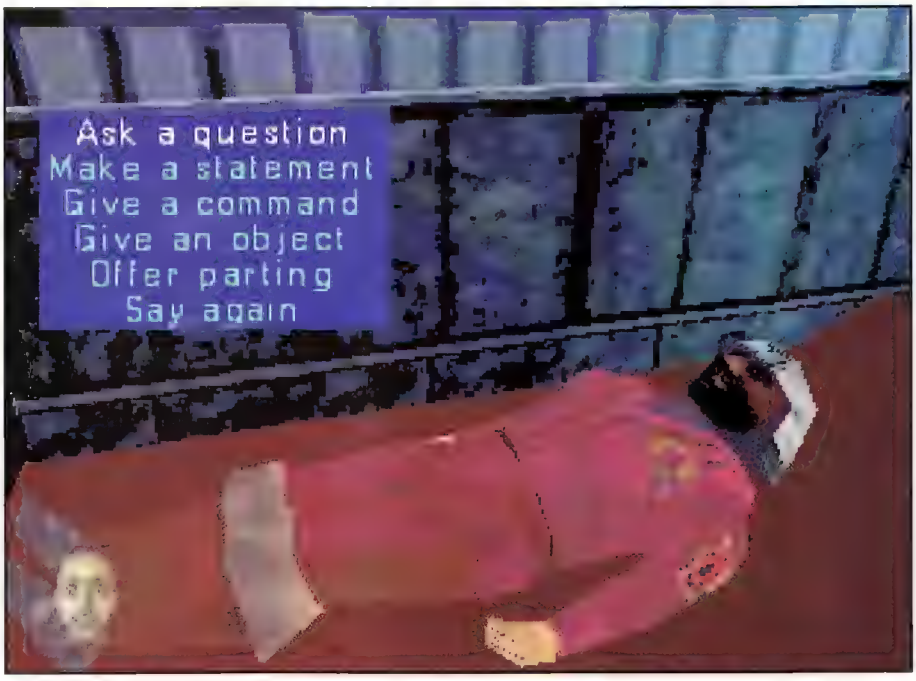


Hey! Weren't you in a Devo video? A handful of the station's personnel wear rather engaging headgear.



...and your mother smelt of elderberries! Insult a crew member, and you'll be emotionally scarred with scathing comebacks such as this one.

Um, what? The typical rules of rhetoric don't apply in the far future.



If you can figure out how to save this engineer's life, you'll find that the rest of your mission will progress much more smoothly.

atrociously archaic text-based interface, and it would take hours to go through the entire dialog tree for just one character. Though it's nice to have such broad options for communicating with *Sentient*'s cast of sixty, the replies from some of the crew members may not be grammatically acceptable, and it helps to know *exactly* what you want from a character before you start gabbing away. One more thing — due to the massive amount of dialog the program is capable of, there's no in-game voice acting, so you get to read speech bubbles instead — *lots* of 'em!

One of *Sentient*'s claims to fame is an enormous cast of 60 crew members. Thanks to some sophisticated AI, they leisurely walk about the ship doing their business, and greet each other as they pass. Some may stop to converse with you, or offer an interesting tidbit about life on board the ICARUS. When you reply or ask questions, you can control your facial expression by pressing the H or S keys (for happy and sad — get it?), and watch as your face in the lower left-hand corner changes from a pouty snarl to an idiotic grin. Part of the challenge is figuring out what type of personality your subject has, and tailoring your own reaction — it's better to put on a happy face when dealing with a silly person, or frown menacingly at someone who has a death wish towards you. Determining a character's personality requires a little bit of imagination on your part, since the expressions chaotically alternate between pissed-off and super-happy.

Much of *Sentient*'s challenge stems from the confusion over just *what* you're supposed to do. It's easy to become lost — the *Sentient* help file even reminds you to take notes with pen and paper to cope with the information overload. On the plus side, several characters will update you on your quest and point you in the right direction.

Depending on your system, *Sentient*'s graphics will either dazzle or disgust. Owners of 3D Blasters or Matrox Mystiques will be treated to crisp and high-res graphics, while everyone else (even 3Dfx owners) will suffer through pixelicious and sloppy visuals with distorted textures and a low frame rate. Even though the ICARUS is a big ship, there's very little variety in your surroundings, and it's easy to get lost, though some crew members will politely escort you about the ship if you ask them.

Other little annoyances abound. You can't actually name your saved games, which are labeled by the place you're in and the amount of time you've spent in the game; there's no mouse support when you try restoring, and you have to use the keyboard; and the Windows 95 specific version crashed whenever I attempted to save (it's a good idea to use the DOS version).

Sentient has also fallen prey to the universally hated gimmick of stupid mazes. Getting hit with a stun blast forces you into a dreamlike state in which you must solve a lengthy hedge maze to wake up. Likewise, getting arrested makes you an unwilling subject in a medical experiment where you're nuked with gamma rays and forced to find your way out of what appears to be an enormous neon hamster maze. Fun.

When you come right down to it, *Sentient* offers enormous replay value and plenty of sub-plots — if you have the patience to handle playing it even one time through. Sci-fi and RPG fans ready for an early-eighties throwback may find this engrossing — but the rest of us would much rather play something that doesn't require as much paperwork.

— *Colin Williamson*

Engineering fancy-pants Mason Garrilac shows off his luxurious living quarters.

I FEEL HAPPY!

One of *Sentient*'s more bizarre features is the ability to control your facial expressions during a conversation. While it's difficult to determine whether or not this has any effect on the game, it's always enjoyable to slam someone with an insult while grinning like a doofus. This isn't the first time that a "Mood-O-Meter" has been used in a game — Activision's superb *Return to Zork* and Corel's questionable *Mode* used the same gimmick in their dialog trees.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

56%

HIGHS: A genuinely large gaming world; lots of characters to interact with.

LOWS: Spotty Direct3D support; interface from Hell; dialog that reads like a third generation translation.

BOTTOM LINE: Those who are able to cope with its cumbersome shortcomings may like *Sentient*.

THE MAGIC ALMANAC

Your Guide to the IMAGINATIVE *World of Magic: The Gathering*

IT CAN TRANSPORT YOU T
FUEL YOUR COMPE
AND STIMULATE THAT C
MUSHY THING BETWE

Everything you need to play fits into this handy compartment.

Translated in nine languages, Magic can be played anywhere on earth. As for other locales, we're working on it.

fig. 1b
THE POWER STRUCTURE

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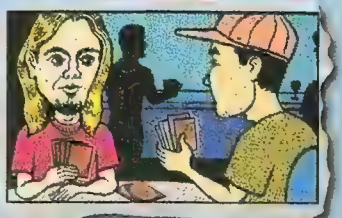
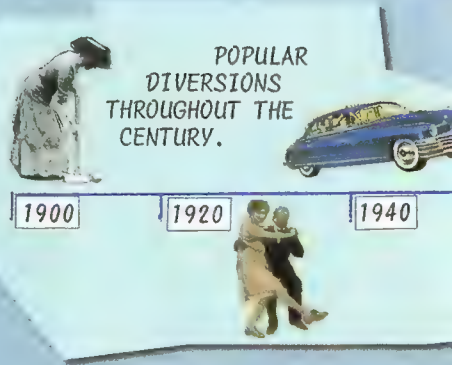


Imagine, a game that relies on social interaction and brain power. What a novel idea!



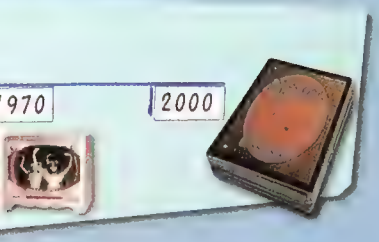
D MYSTICAL LANDS, TITIVE DRIVE TTEN NEGLECTED EN YOUR EARS.

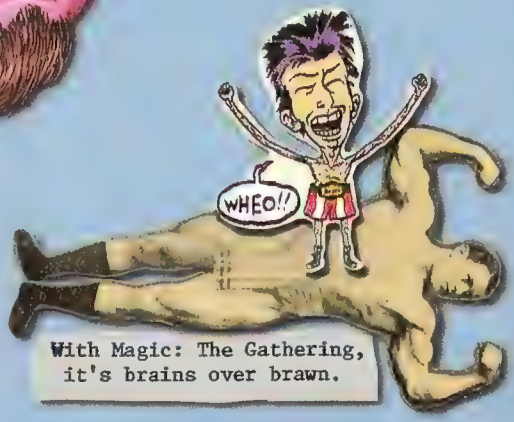
To flee the monotony of everyday life, Magic is a wise alternative to the street luge.

On the $1,000,000 Magic Pro Tour, winners walk away with big bucks. And a trail of adoring fans in tow.

Collectability is yet another fun aspect of Magic. Certain rare cards may fetch $500 on the open market.

Looking for some mind candy? All you need is a deck of Magic cards, a worthy opponent and a functioning cerebrum. Unleash your intellectual insect! Sprout wings! Fly! Be free!





With Magic: The Gathering, it's brains over brawn.

Product Information Number 362

Each Magic card features artwork so vivid, you may actually feel its power. This is not always a good thing.

Magic gets its power from a simple deck of cards. And another often neglected source: your brain.

Norse by Norsewest

Category: Action/Strategy

Developer: Beam Software

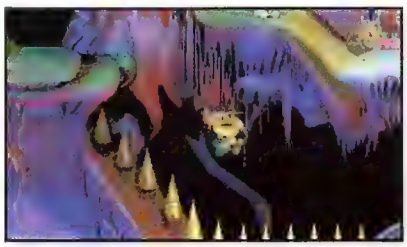
Publisher: Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Avenue, Irvine, CA 92606 (800) 969-4263

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/100; 16MB RAM; DOS 5.0 or higher	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; Supported sound card

Those nutty Norwegians slash and belch their way back to the PC — but did they learn any new tricks during their three-year hiatus?

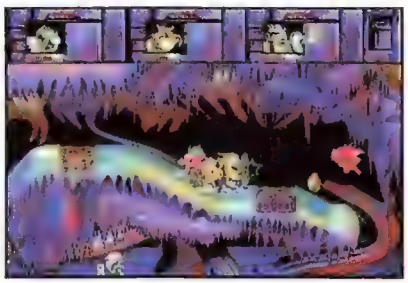
Way back in 1994, puzzle fans were treated to *The Lost Vikings*, an action-based puzzler that blended the cooperative strategy of *Lemmings* with the hop-n-bop platforming action of 16-bit console games. Though it had a few quirky problems, *The Lost Vikings* had plenty of 'attitude,' and gained an impressive following. Though it's odd that Interplay has taken this long to create a sequel, doesn't the best usually come to those who wait? The answer may surprise you...

This time around, the heroic Nordic trio of Olaf, Baleog, and Erik have returned to unload a can of hurt on the pasty alien abductor known as Tomator. Joining our brothers three are the aptly-named Scorch the Dragon and Fang the Werewolf, who add their own unique abilities to the Vikings' attempts to kick Tomator's squishy butt and get back home. Interaction and cooperation is the key to survival in *Norse by Norsewest* — one Viking can't do it all. For example, positioning the brutish Olaf will allow the nimble Erik to hop on his head and reach a high platform that contains an object required to finish the level. Likewise, Fang can shred his enemies with velociraptor-like efficiency, clearing the path of bad guys. The levels are usually completed when you manage to collect the three required items, and get all the Vikings to the exit area.



Yeehaw! Olaf the berserker catches some air with his Viking shield cum hang glider.

Erik has no problems taking out the competition with a good old-fashioned body-check.



Fiery-haired Erik plans his next move as his Viking brethren hold off an attack from an angry dragon.

So far, so good. At first glance, *Norse by Norsewest* may look like a worthy follow-up to a solid predecessor — but there are startlingly few items on the list of improvements. For starters, the graphics' hand-drawn look has been scrapped, and Erik, Baelog, and Olaf have been 3D rendered. This wouldn't be a problem, except for the fact that *Norse by Norsewest* runs in a mode identical to the low-res VGA of yesteryear — everyone looks painfully pixelated and washed-out. The dull backgrounds also show little improvement, though the cutscenes bring the presentation up a notch. To be brutally honest, there isn't much improvement over the aging Super Nintendo version of *The Lost Vikings*.

Of course, to the true PC gamer, graphics matter not — as long as there's an adequate helping of gameplay at the core. But *Norse by Norsewest* offers few improvements in terms of looks *or* fun factor. One of the biggest headaches from the first title still throbs away — if one of your Vikings kicks off midway through the level, you *must* restart the board, regardless of the progress you've made. And any actual saving is handled through passwords you enter tediously with the arrow keys, contributing to the theory that this was a last-minute console port.

Some popular voice actors were brought in to flesh out our diverse cast — veterans from numerous Disney cartoons and *The Simpsons* regulars almost manage to breathe some much-needed life into the game. Unfortunately, the actual writing is so vapid that it barely counts for anything. The remainder of the audio content is just as uninspired, with so-so sound effects and a puzzlingly anachronistic techno-style music track. How about a little pseudo-John Williams instead?

Even though a few new abilities for the Vikings (and a finger-cramping two-player mode) manage to keep things interesting, I kept getting the itchy feeling that the original *The Lost Vikings* was a better game — and it's never a good sign when a three-year-old title can still manage to outshine its flashy new sequel. If *The Lost Vikings* floated your boat, *Norse By Norsewest* wouldn't be a bad bet — just don't go in expecting a full, 32-bit facelift. The rest of us should steer clear of this fjord.

— Colin Williamson

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

62%

HIGHS: It's more of the same for *Lost Vikings* buffs; nice presentation of cutscenes.

LOWS: Sub-par graphics; very little improvement over the original.

BOTTOM LINE: Hardly a respectable follow-up, but it may keep fans of the series busy.

3D Ultra Mini-Golf

Category: Arcade

Developer: Sierra

Publisher: Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E. Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707

Required	We Recommend
2X CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; Windows 3.1 or higher; Mouse	4X CD-ROM drive; Windows 95; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

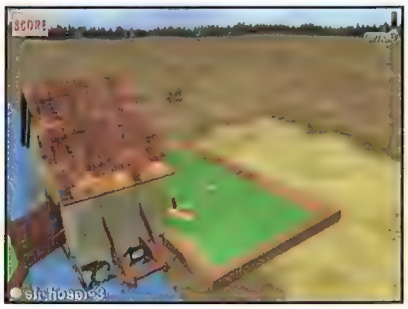
Capitalizing on the success of its *3D Ultra Pinball* series, Sierra's *3D Ultra Mini-Golf* tries to resurrect another lost pastime by bringing the world of putt-putt golf to the PC. But unlike pinball, it's obvious it will take more than a new coat of paint to bring back the forgotten sport of mini-golf.

Like those mini-golf courses your parents used to drag you to, where decrepit windmills and garish clown faces served as major annoyances as you tried to putt your way across mildewed astroturf, Sierra has recreated a multitude of bizarre hazards and elaborate holes for your amusement and ultimate aggravation. Lighthouses, windmills, rocketships, and construction zones are just some of the themes used, and each has its own complement of tricks and traps.

But unlike the variety of controls available in most big name golf simulations, *Mini-Golf*'s biggest problem is that each hole is prerendered and static, with no movement or viewing options to allow you to view the entire course or take a close look at alternate paths. As you make your putts, the view automatically shifts to a new predetermined view, but doesn't center the ball and often obscures your view of the hole.

On some of the more elaborate holes where you need to follow a precise path, you'll need to progress by trial and error to find the hole, often disoriented by the seemingly abstract selection of views. While there are targeting options and helpful (and annoying) voice-overs to give you clues, you rarely get a clear picture of where to hit the ball.

And, be warned — the challenge of the game is moderate at best. After playing through just a couple of rounds, I had successfully completed the course under par using the default swing meter. After switching to the True Putt setting (a mouse swing interface borrowed from *FPS: Golf*) it took a couple more rounds to get used to, but again, I broke par with little trouble. Once you learn the courses, and figured out the trick to each hole, you can win with your eyes closed.



Less than advantageous angles and lack of viewing options make lining up on your putt a tricky prospect.

Mini-Golf's frustrating features make it an unacceptable substitute for the cheesy joys of bent putters and goofy obstacles.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

47%

HIGHS: Nice production values. True Putt option makes things interesting.

LOWS: Annoying viewing angles; limited replay value.

BOTTOM LINE: For real putt-putt golf excitement, take a pass on *Mini-Golf*, load up the car and head for the nearest mini-golf course.

ARE STRATEGY GAMES TOO

CIVILIZED?

D.A. Pursuit of Justice: The Sunset Boulevard Deuce

Category: Adventure

Developer: Legacy

Publisher: Legacy Software, 5340 Alla Road, Los Angeles, CA 90066 (310) 823-2423

Required	We Recommend
Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 75; 8MB RAM; 15MB hard-drive space	Pentium 133; 16MB RAM

Budding Perry Masons should enjoy this realistic and detailed full-motion video courtroom drama.

If you've ever been gripped by a tense courtroom drama on TV or at the movies, and fancied yourself in the shoes of that hot young D.A. fighting the system to bring criminal scumsuckers to justice, Legacy Software has something that might be right up your street. But be warned — unlike those slick Hollywood adaptations, this is one drama that doesn't gloss over the hard work and legal research that goes into bringing even the simplest case to trial.

Imagine this as the legal counterpart to Sierra's Police Quest series, and you have the general idea. Like those games, *D.A. Pursuit of Justice* aims for out-and-out realism rather than glitz, glamour, and action — if you want a courtroom game where you can slam your fist on the bench and scream things like "You can't handle the truth!", you can forget it. If you want to be a successful prosecutor in this game, you need to do things by the book.

D.A. Pursuit of Justice is actually a series of six FMV-based games — the first three have just been released, each one a different case based around a common game engine — and what better place to start than Case One, *The Sunset Boulevard Deuce*? You start out as an ambitious young Deputy D.A., so don't get any ideas about prosecuting high-profile celebrity murder cases just yet, even if this is Los Angeles — this is a standard DUI involving a known drunk-driver whose truck went out of control and crashed into a bus bench. There's a mountain of evidence against the defendant (in fact you *know* he's guilty because the blurb on the box tells you so), but you've got to collect it, organize it and, most importantly, present it properly in court in order to secure a conviction.

In the first phase of the game (which plays out disarmingly quickly), you have four days to collect as much evidence as you can by viewing taped interviews with witnesses, ordering forensic tests and talking with medical examiners. Then, ready or not, it's time to go to trial. Having set out your evidence (exhibits, witnesses, etc), you begin the case for the prosecution. Call your witnesses and ask them questions about the topics of your choice from a multiple choice list. Tread carefully — the defense attorney will be all over you like a rash if you lead a witness or ask improper questions, and it's all too easy for your case to be thrown out if you can't back up your lines of questioning with legal precedent.

The Case Constructor is where you organize your evidence and witnesses for trial.

The game's realism is a double-edged sword — on the one hand it can be fascinating to pore over the minutiae of the case and organize your evidence, but much of the time your actions are severely limited by the game's strict adherence to legal procedure — put one foot out of line, and you'll be knocked back and lose credibility before the jury. If that's your bag — if you found yourself glued to every minute of the O.J. trial, for instance — you'll love this, but I sometimes found myself put off by the baffling legalese and constant objections from the defense bench. Ultimately, *D.A.*'s problem is that, intriguing as it is while it lasts, it just doesn't last that long — through trial and error (no pun intended), you should be able to secure a guilty verdict within a few days' play. Later cases in the series promise more complex gameplay and more glamorous cases like diamond robberies and gangland murders, so if this type of game looks like your thing, you may be better off skipping this first installment and tackling some bigger cases right off the bat.

— *Gary Whitta*

District Attorney Frank Jarrett is your boss, and is available to dispense legal advice throughout your case preparation.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

70%

HIGHS: Interesting and original; and even educational.

LOWS: Short lifespan, game procedures can be repetitive and frustrating.

BOTTOM LINE: A game of limited appeal, but armchair attorneys willing to do their homework will find it interesting.

Hoyle Poker

Category: Card Game

Developer: Sierra

Publisher: Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 4MB RAM; Win 3.1 or 95; Mouse	Pentium 90; 8MB RAM; Internet access

Sierra's long-running line of Hoyle card games continues with *Hoyle Poker*, a poker simulation that includes more than a dozen variations of this time-honored pursuit. Being an old hand at creating card games for the PC, Sierra seems to really have its act together with this edition. Each aspect of the game, whether it's choosing the type of game or selecting a bet, is laid out with an easy-to-use approach.

What makes *Hoyle Poker* stand out are the multiple variations to choose from that give it a warm, friendly, neighborhood-game appeal. There are the standards you'd expect like 5 Card Draw and 5 or 7 Card Stud, but added to these are many of the fun and wacky games like Baseball (all 3s and 9s are wild), Murder, and The Bitch, that add spice to the mix.

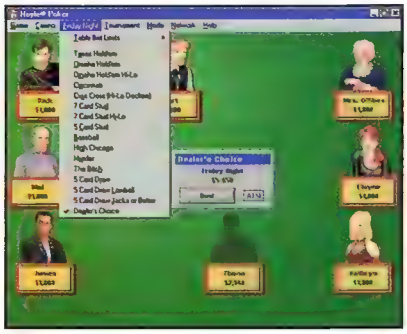
Taking this one step further, included in the box is a 358-page book titled *The Rules of Neighborhood Poker According to Hoyle* by Stewart Wolpin that provides rules and tips on all of the variations in *Hoyle Poker*, plus other variations not included with the game.

In the quirkiest feature of the game, the computer opponents are meant to have their own attitude. Yep, that's what I said, *attitude*. Opponents are likely to spout out quips like "I've got more guts than a meat packing plant" or "Kiss my call." The rate at which these pearls are uttered is adjustable, and fortunately, can be turned off altogether.

If playing the computer isn't your cup of tea, you can click a button and dial in to the Sierra Internet Gaming System (SIGS), provided you have Internet access. SIGS is a free web site where you can play real people, though 5 Card Draw is the only game currently provided.

Having so many different games in one program is nice, plus the flexibility of adjusting all the settings and rules makes this much better than your average poker sim. So, if you enjoy a quick game of poker on the PC, *Hoyle* will give you a real bang for the buck.

— Joseph Novicki



One of the best features is a Dealer's Choice option, where the computer opponents will select games at random — just like you'd play with your friends.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Many variations of poker, some you might not be familiar with; free access to SIGS.

80%

LOWS: The "attitude" gets tiresome *real* fast.

BOTTOM LINE: Sierra's put its experience to good use, with an attractive, easy-to-use, and fun poker simulation.

OR, PERHAPS, NOT

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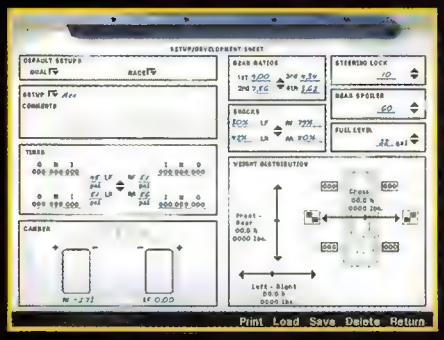

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Product Information Number 309

Battlesport

Category: Action

Developer: Unexpected Development

Publisher: Acclaim Ent., 1 Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777 (516) 656-5000

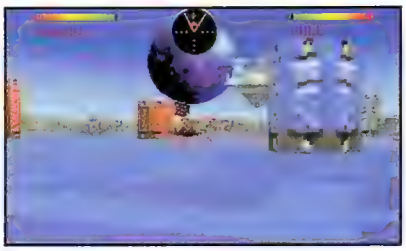
Required	We Recommend
2X CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; DOS 5.0; 7.5MB HD space	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; Joystick

Plucked from Acclaim's seemingly endless vault of console turkeys, *Battlesport* is the latest title to join the ranks of such dregs as *Batman Forever*, *Dragonheart*, and *Judge Dredd*. And while there is little to redeem or distinguish this title from a landfill of bad console ports, *Battlesport* mercifully shuns the requisite over-hyped movie license and attempts to break out of the jump-and-shoot mold with a 3D twist.

Released on the now-defunct 3DO a few years ago, *Battlesport* is a futuristic sports game where the player slips behind the controls of a massive hover-tank to engage in one-on-one arena-style competition. Though the basic gameplay is little more than a glorified one-on-one deathmatch, the real goal of each player is to gain control of a ball while using a variety of power-ups to distract or disable your opponent in order to make that winning shot. Just take a smidgen of *Ballblazer*, a teaspoon of *T-Mek*, and toss in the giant pixels and garish graphics from *Zephyr*, and you'll get a pretty good idea of what's in store.

Despite its fairly promising premise, *Battlesport*'s gameplay is dull and unappealing. You roam around a claustrophobic arena collecting power-ups, shooting at the enemy, and firing the ball at the goal with endless repetition, against a field of inadequate computer controlled goons. In typical console fashion, your adversaries have menacing names, fearsome reputations, and special abilities, but these rarely translate into any perceptible challenge on the court. The artificial intelligence is terrible, with computer controlled opponents regularly fleeing and attacking, whether sitting still or on the offensive.

Other overwhelming problems with *Battlesport* come from its age and origin. Thanks to the console version's original unaltered graphics, *Battlesport* is a dated, unattractive mess. The 3D engine is terribly underpowered, with chunky textures and lame four-sided bitmapped vehicles. The controls are weak and sluggish, but then again, so is the gameplay.



Futuristic tank combat mixed with one-on-one basketball isn't enough to make up for *Battlesport*'s aging graphics and lackluster gameplay.

Ultimately, there's really no justification for *Battlesport*'s release on PC. The graphics are terrible and the gameplay is atrocious no matter how you slice it. If you see this steaming pile on the shelf, just keep on walking.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

20%

HIGHS: The name is kinda nice.

LOWS: Ancient graphics, lackluster gameplay, and shoddy controls deal a triple dose of death on this clunker.

BOTTOM LINE: Simply terrible. Trust us on this one — you'll want to avoid it at all costs.

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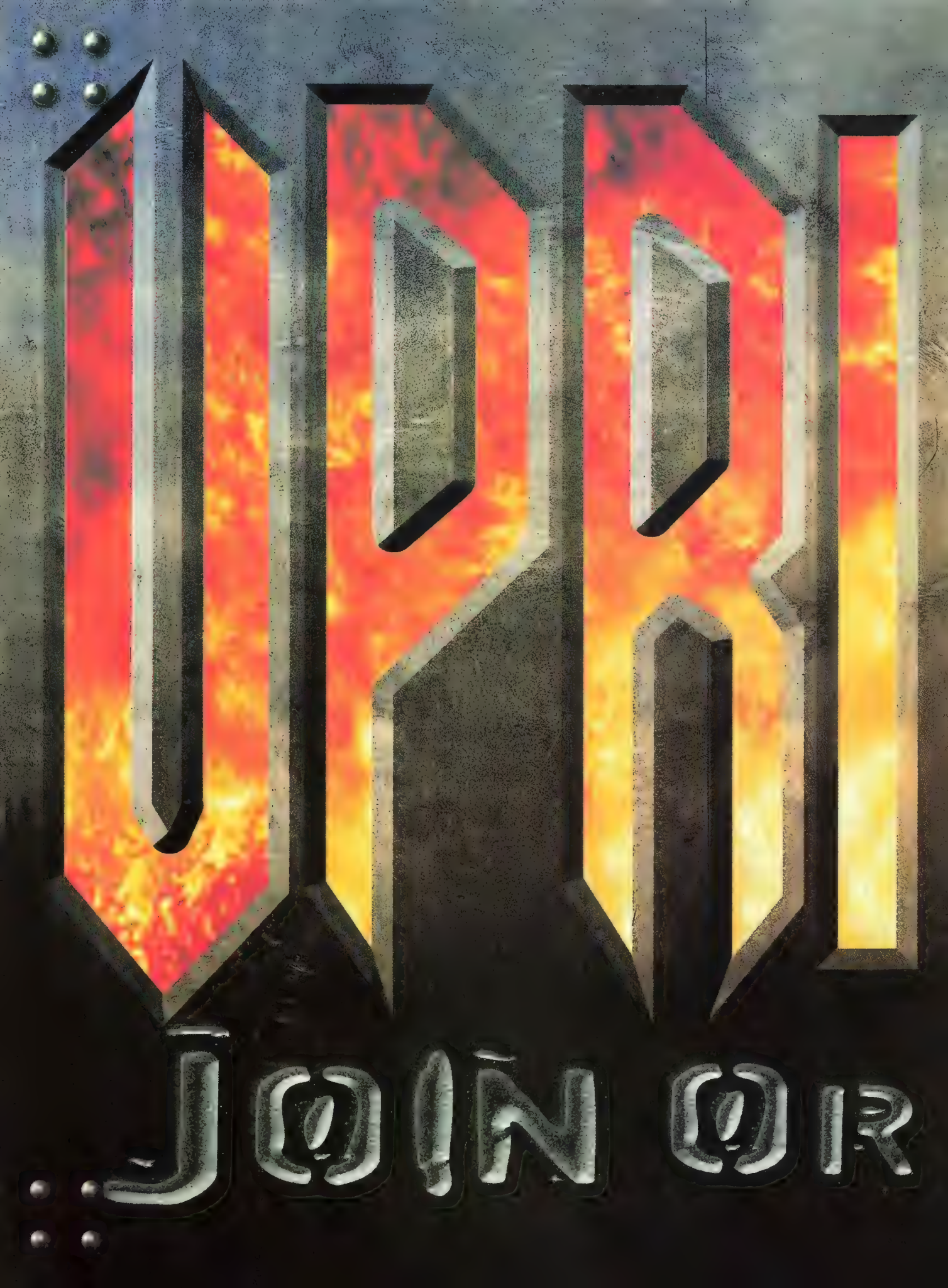
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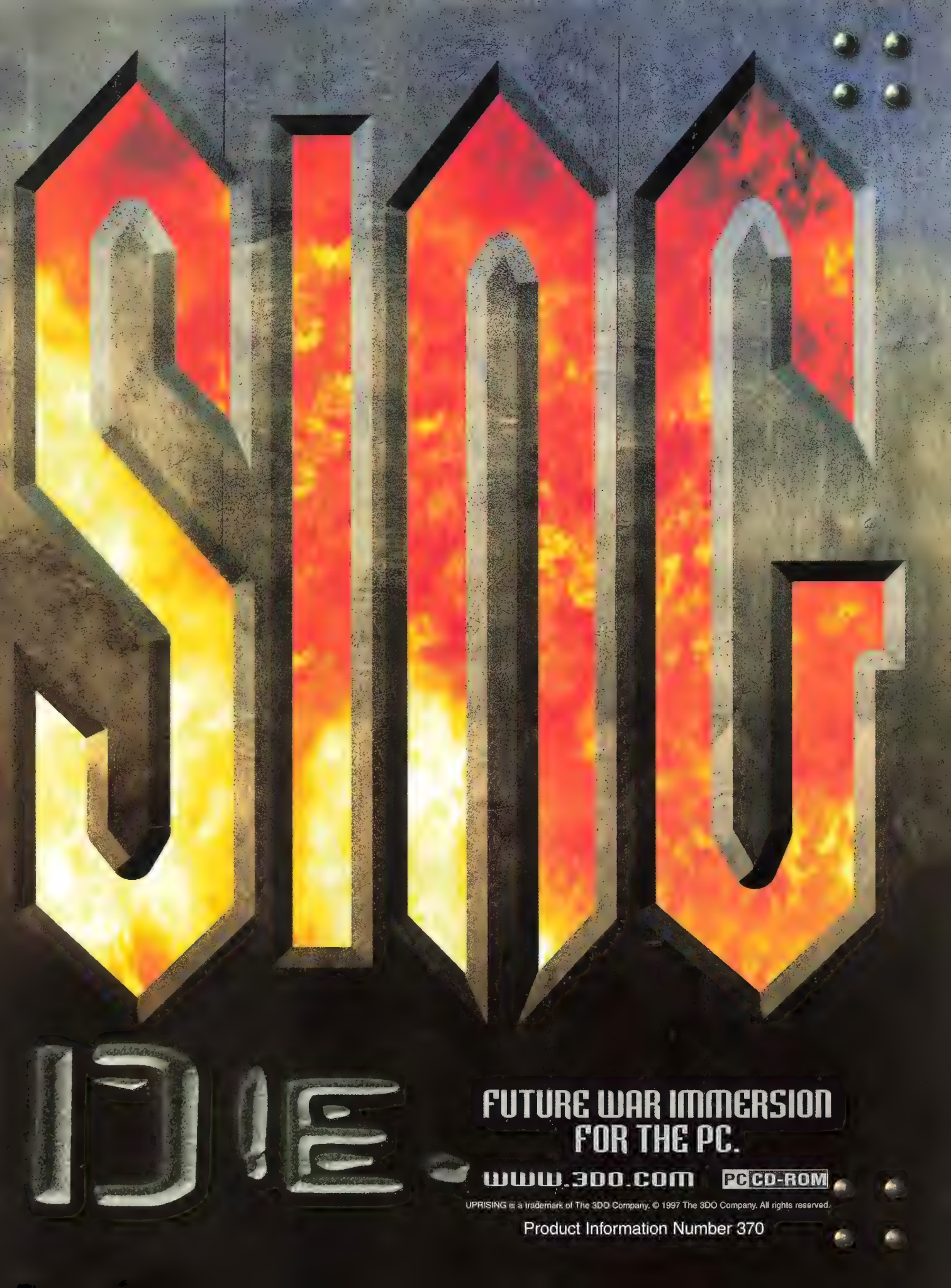
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Product Information Number 370

Shadows Over Riva

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Roleplaying

Developer: Attic Software

Publisher: Sir-tech Software, Inc., P.O. Box 245, Ogdensburg, NY 13669 (315) 393-6633

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; 60MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse	Pentium; Supported sound card

After years of waiting, the final game in the Realms of Arkania trilogy arrives, ready for action.

From the classic Wizardry series to the award-winning *Realms of Arkania: Star Trail*, Sir-tech has always delivered strong, enthralling roleplaying games to the computer market. In recent years, its Realms of Arkania series has received praise from roleplaying gamers all over the world, and has always stood out as one of the most complex computer roleplaying games you could buy. *Shadows Over Riva* continues that tradition, with mixed but overall good results.

Riva picks up where *Star Trail* left off, after your party rescues the Salamander Stone and forges a tentative peace between the Elves and the Dwarves. Hearing of some mysterious goings-on in the port town of Riva, your party travels there to see what's up. You start the game in the Temple of Travia, where you can decide whether to create a new party, or use the default party already set up.

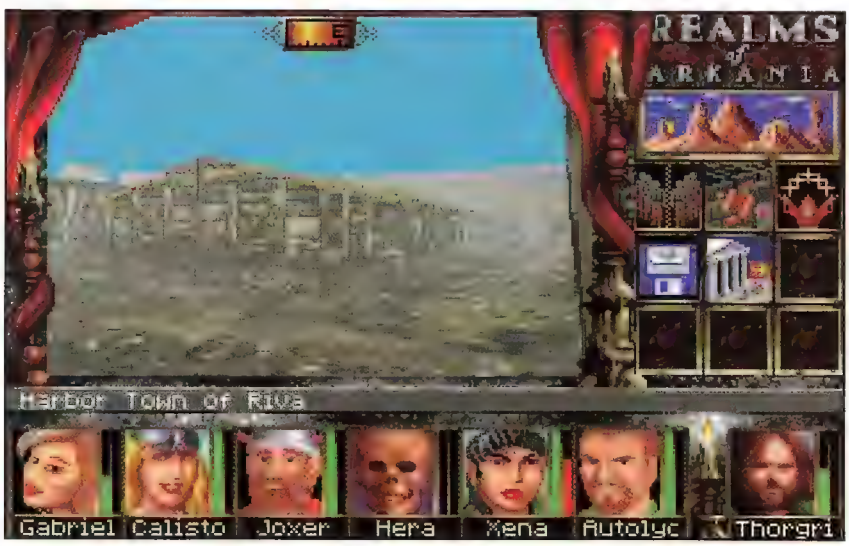
In *Riva*, you've got a ton of stats on each character, hundreds of inventory items, and more numbers than a mathematician can keep track of. To make things easier, you can have the computer take over most of the tasks. At the beginning of the game, you can choose to play in Novice or Advanced mode, which means you either handle the skill increases yourself, or let the computer do the dirty work. At every step, the computer can take over the handling of the numbers from you, which is a welcome relief for those who don't like number-crunching. For those who like to configure their characters exactly to their liking, however, there's plenty of room to play.

Creating characters itself is a huge part of getting into the game. In advanced mode, it could easily take a few hours to create a party of six characters, with all the rolls, tweaking, and level increases to make them battle-worthy. But that's what a true roleplaying game is all about. Based on Das Schwarz Auge, Germany's best-selling roleplaying game system (which consistently outsold TSR's Advanced Dungeons and Dragons), *Riva* contains most elements of the hugely detailed system.

No, this isn't Brad Pitt. This is the arms merchant in Riva's marketplace. Bring back some weapons you take off your dead adversaries, and you'll make some cash off them.

All of these points applied to *Riva*'s predecessor *Star Trail*, and *Riva* admirably carries this massive roleplaying banner for a new generation, but the tried-and-true system is beginning to show signs of age. For all intents and purposes, *Riva* is almost exactly like *Star Trail*, which in its time, was the same game as *Blades of Destiny*, the first Arkania game. *Star Trail* was a great game, mind you, and still worthy of all the Best Roleplaying Game awards it won, but three years later you'd think its sequel would improve on the technology a bit, primarily the combat interface. Combat is turn-based, with plenty of options, from exchanging items and weapons, to casting spells and attacking. The battle plays out on a grid that's viewed from a skewed top-down perspective, so when characters start getting bunched up, it gets really difficult to tell who's standing on which square, and where you should move them. This is especially annoying when you're trying to find a good location for using a missile weapon. Simply adding the ability to rotate the camera to another angle would have helped immensely.

Because it's still using the same engine, the interface is very similar to *Star Trail* — although the graphics of the first-person perspective have drastically improved. The textures are nice, varying largely from the city of Riva to the underground dwellings, such as the sewers and Dwarven mines. You can even opt to make the travel window full-screen, and access the button functions by choosing from a pop-up menu. The environment changes to reflect weather patterns, dawn and dusk, and, of course, night.



These run-down shacks are home to the Holberkians, a race of half-orcs, half-elves that play an integral part in the main story line.

Use the item distributor to load each of your characters with the appropriate gear and weapons. The green lights will tell you if a character can use an item or not.

The automap works great, and gives you the ability to make notes at any location for future reference. However, it no longer allows you to jump from one explored location to another, which makes traveling through Riva a long process. The diary keeps track of your travels, and is a handy reference for your journey. It even includes a basic search engine, so you can find references quickly and easily.

Although slightly improved, the interface for *Riva* remains clunky. The Item Distributor screen helps arrange items between party members, and helps keep track of each character's encumbrance, and a little green light indicates whether or not they can use a highlighted weapon (nice for those occasions when you find a large battle-axe and you're not sure who can wield it). You can even organize the items you're viewing by selecting filters. However, there's no easy way to go from this screen to a list of skill statistics for the characters, so it's difficult to know who the *best* person to give a weapon to might be, unless you write it down or print out the character sheet. Also, if you manage to kill a party of monsters, you might get more equipment than you could carry. The game doesn't let you leave equipment on the floor, though — once you drop it, it's gone.

True to the previous Realms of Arkania games, *Riva* contains a gripping story line, including sub-quests like tracking and killing a wizard who likes to steal pets, uncovering a band of pirates, and putting the end to a vampire haunting the town. Because all the action takes place in Riva, there's no need to use an overhead travel map, which means you don't have to worry about those annoying little things like shoes wearing out halfway to a destination, or a party member becoming sick on the journey. Everything happens in a local area, which keeps the plot going at a steady pace. For the first part of the game, you only enter combat a couple of times, and the rest of the time you explore new areas, meet new characters, and uncover new secrets.

The debate about whether or not *Shadows Over Riva* should get the Editors' Choice Award raged on and on in the *PC Gamer* offices, and finally, it was concluded that the game should receive honors for doing exactly what it set out to do: provide a fun, engrossing roleplaying conclusion to the Realms of Arkania trilogy, building on the same game engine to create a consistent trilogy of roleplaying games. We roleplaying gamers are lucky — other RPGs slated for release this year will probably have better graphics, more intuitive interfaces, and more non-linear adventuring. But this one still has everything a real RPG fan could want.

— Michael Wolf

COMBAT 101

Combat plays a large role in *Shadows Over Riva*, and strategy has a lot to do with how well your battles go.

Follow these simple rules of thumb, and you'll be well on your way toward advancing levels. Of course, there are even more advanced strategies, but we'll let you figure those out for yourself.

DON'T GET SURROUNDED

It seems rather obvious, but do what you can to keep your fighters free of being surrounded by the enemy. Line up your warriors so that no two monsters can hit any one character. In other words, watch your back. Keep in mind that you can only conduct hand-to-hand combat from the immediately adjacent square — not diagonally. You won't fare well if all your fighters have more than two enemies hammering on them.

STAY BACK

If you have any ranged weapons, use them! Move your armored fighters to the front, and keep your archers or knife-throwing characters back to weaken the foe from a distance. Not only does this help keep your characters alive, but while you can only attack hand-to-hand when directly adjacent to an enemy, you can use ranged weapons from a diagonal. Keep your archers and knife-throwers off to the sides, and they can attack from more angles.

MAGIC'S THE KEY

You'd be surprised what a well-placed magical spell can do, especially one that blinds enemies that fire bows at your group. Let the big strong warriors take on the front-runners of the enemy group, while your magic users knock out the opposition from the back.

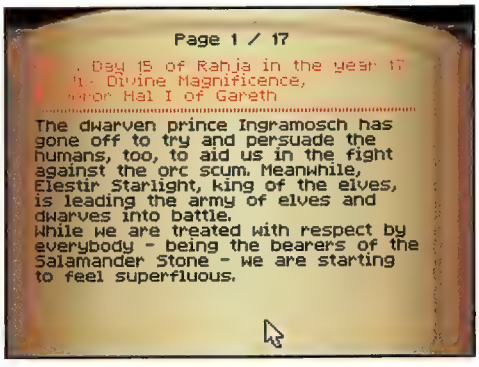
DON'T BUNCH UP

Fighting in close quarters is never a good idea, especially when there's a lot of monsters to fight. Keep in mind that you can't move your characters through squares already occupied, so you'll want to do what you can to keep any pathways clear for reinforcements to move in if needed. And they're almost always needed. Besides, spreading out the enemy gives your archers more targets to choose from.

LET THE COMPUTER DO THE WORK

Let's face it. Sometimes, wading through 15 easily-beaten opponents is not only time consuming, but boring. So let the computer do the work for you. Click on Computer Combat, and Compute Combat. You'll only have to wait a few seconds, and the battle's outcome will be decided. Of course, this method might also work when there are a lot of strong creatures you're having a hard time with. Sometimes the computer can do better work than you can, since it bases its combat on statistics. If you're facing a particularly difficult force, try saving your game before combat. Then, let the computer deal out the damage. If you lose some characters, try again. Keep trying until all of your characters come out alive — if you lose only a couple, you can assume you have a pretty good chance. If all of your characters die every time, it's probably a lost cause. If you succeed, your party may be worse for the wear, but they'll be alive.

It is exactly what you want to avoid: those warriors trapped by the orcs have a serious pounding coming.


Page 1 / 17
. Day 15 of Rahja in the year 17
1. Divine Magnificence,
Prior Hal I of Gareth
The dwarven prince Ingramosch has gone off to try and persuade the humans, too, to aid us in the fight against the orc scum. Meanwhile, Elestir Starlight, king of the elves, is leading the army of elves and dwarves into battle.
While we are treated with respect by everybody - being the bearers of the Salamander Stone - we are starting to feel superfluous.

The diary keeps track of who you meet, and the quests that you want to go on.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

88%

HIGHS: Engrossing story line; lots of NPCs, items, sub-quests, and stats for hard-core gamers.

LOWS: Dated graphics; clumsy interface at times; annoying combat views.

BOTTOM LINE: It's a worthy sequel to *Star Trail*, and the old engine is still fun to play with.

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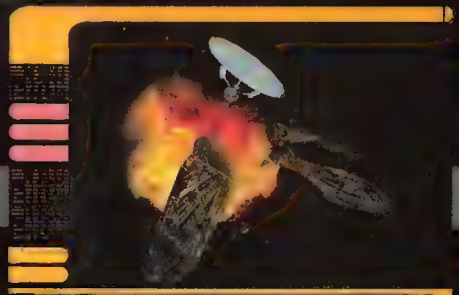

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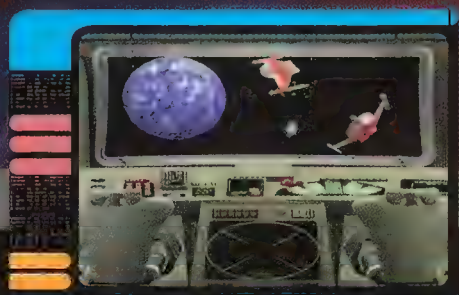

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You'll notice that the section has grown enormously in just a few short months. It's so hard to keep it in clothes! If you could see Joel's desk, you'd understand why. There's just too much juicy gaming hardware rolling into our little office.

The letters are rolling in, too, and we appreciate it. Joel reads every single piece of mail that crosses his desk and his E-mail in-box, even if he doesn't have time to respond to them all.

Speaking of mail, one of the most common topics brought up by readers is multi-player gaming. How, they ask, do we get around this lag we run into every time we play a game over the Internet? Why, they demand, do all of these new games have IPX support when almost nobody has an IPX network lying around the house? And why, they bellow, does *PC Gamer* flaunt its multi-player antics every month, conjuring images of the staff playing over their nice, cozy, office network, while we sit at home and dream? What can I do, they scream, fingers clamped around Joel's neck, to *build my own network?!*

Funny you should ask. This month, we bring you an exhaustive report on how you can build a network in your very own home. Now you'll be able to invite your friends and their computers over and frag them until they cry for mercy.

Multi-player gaming has long been touted as the greatest trend in PC gaming since the first-person shooter, and it's no wonder why. Even great games lose their novelty after a while, but playing against real people can breath new life into games you thought you had played out long ago.

That's aparent right here at *PC Gamer*. Here, we receive and play more games than anyone would care to count, so the list of games that actually stay on our hard drives for more than a couple of months is very short, and it's always topped by multi-player games. There's something satisfying about destroying somebody's construction yard in *C&C: Red Alert*, and actually hearing a cry of anguish a few feet away...oops, there we go flaunting again.

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How We Rate The Hard Stuff

You've been around long enough to know the greatest technology doesn't mean a thing unless it improves the games you love to play. Our reviews focus on real-world testing, but when a number is in order for comparisons, we use the benchmarking tools developed by our hardware-frenzied sister publication, *boot*. Between our rigorous testing and the thorough bootMarks, we'll give you the lowdown on which devices perform and which ones fizzle.

PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards

Every month, we honor the best peripherals, utilities, and hardware we test with our Editors' Choice award. So when you see the PCG Editors' Choice logo on hardware at a local computer store, you can be sure it's among the best.

HOW TO:

Build A Network

So, you're sick of the horrendous lag that plagues multi-player Internet games. Or maybe you don't want to tie up the phone line for hours playing *X-wing vs. TIE Fighter*. But underneath it all, you crave the incomparable feeling of conquest that you can only get by defeating a real human being. What you really want to do is...*build a network.*

It's not as hard or expensive as you might think. There are several methods of connecting computers together for multi-player gaming. You can use a null modem connection, provided there are only two computers involved; you can invest in one of a number of kits available to connect computers via an actual network, or you can do it the way the pros do; go out, buy the components, and build a network from the ground up. In all of these methods, the computers will all have to be in the same place, so clear off the coffee table, invite some friends over, and tell 'em to bring their PCs.

Three ways to frag your friends

Quake employs a typical multi-player null modem setup screen.

THE TWO-TIN-CANS-AND-A-PIECE-OF-STRING METHOD

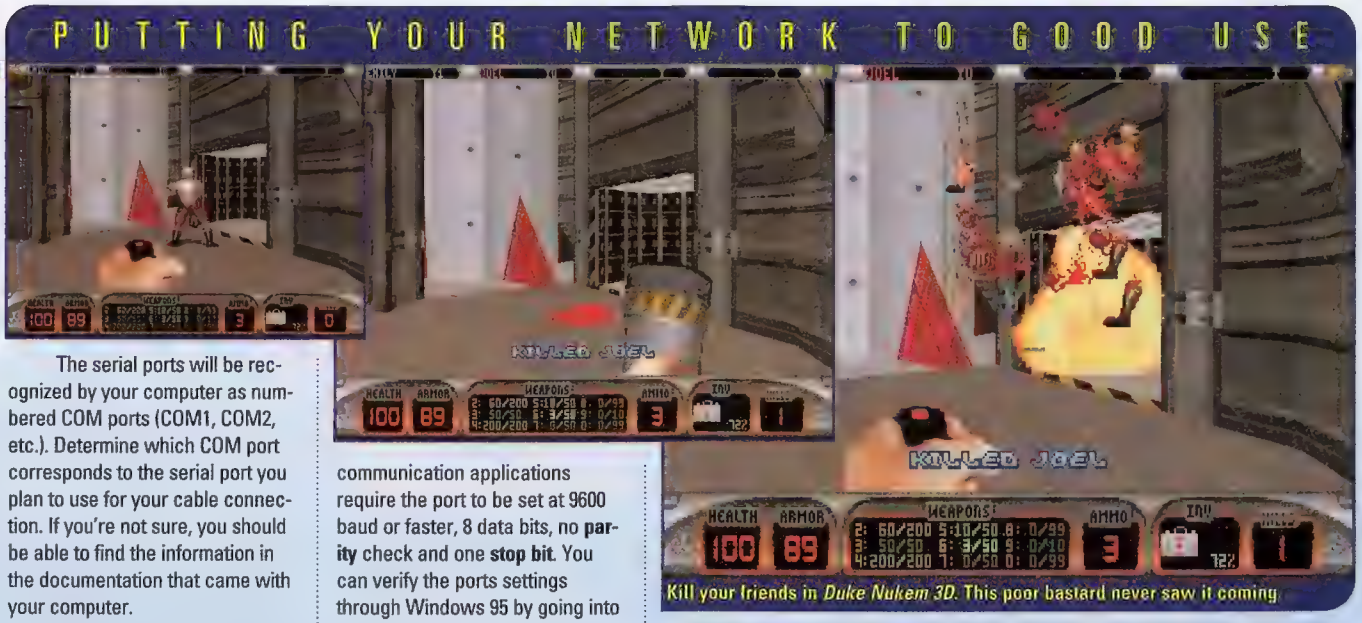
Well, not it's not *that* primitive, but it's certainly uncomplicated. By far, the simplest way to connect two computers for the purpose of gaming is through the use of a null modem cable. These specially wired cables are used to connect two PCs directly via their serial ports. Null modem cables are available from most computer equipment retailers, generally in lengths between 6 and 25 feet.

The first step is to determine information about the serial ports of the two computers you are connecting. Most PCs have two serial ports on the back; they'll either have 9 or 25 male pins in two rows. When you've located a free serial port on each computer, you can determine what type of connectors the null modem cable will need. If you can't find exactly what you need, you can build a suitable cable by adding 9-pin to 25-pin (or 25-pin to 9-pin) adapters, which you should be able to find in abundance wherever you buy the serial cable. Just make sure you get a null modem cable, or a serial cable and a null modem adapter. A standard serial cable alone won't work.

General Rules

- If you must open a computer, be aware of static electricity. Plant your feet and ground yourself before touching any components. Try to handle boards by the edges, and avoid touching any electrical contacts; believe it or not, finger oil can cause bad contact!
- Back up any system files that may be altered by networking software, including your AUTOEXEC.BAT, CONFIG.SYS, WIN.INI, SYSTEM.INI and, if there is one, PROTOCOL.INI. The first two can be found in the root directory of your C: drive; the others will be in your Windows directory.
- Make a note of any settings you have to change *before* you change them. This includes any jumper, BIOS, or Windows settings.
- Make a bootable floppy disk in case something should go so wrong that your computer can't boot from the hard drive.

PUTTING YOUR NETWORK TO GOOD USE



Kill your friends in *Duke Nukem 3D*. This poor bastard never saw it coming

The serial ports will be recognized by your computer as numbered COM ports (COM1, COM2, etc.). Determine which COM port corresponds to the serial port you plan to use for your cable connection. If you're not sure, you should be able to find the information in the documentation that came with your computer.

With the PCs powered off, connect the computers with your null modem cable (and adapters, if necessary) and turn them back on. In theory, that's all there should be to it. You can test it right away by attempting to play a game over your connection; most multi-player enabled games will have an option for null modem play, also referred to as serial or direct connection. Follow the instructions for the game, and be sure you select the proper COM ports in each case.

If the two computers detect each other and the game launches, then congratulations! You're ready for some multi-player Gaming Goodness! If not, then there are a number of parameters you can check.

First, look at your cabling. The worst thing you can do is spend all afternoon troubleshooting obscure software settings while one end of your cable is lying unattached on the floor. Make sure that your serial ports are enabled; this may be a matter of entering the computer's CMOS setup program or actually checking jumper settings on the system board or I/O card within the computer.

If you're sure the ports are enabled and that you're using the proper port numbers, the next thing to check is the ports' settings. The vast majority of serial communication applications require the port to be set at 9600 baud or faster, 8 data bits, no **parity** check and one **stop bit**. You can verify the ports settings through Windows 95 by going into the Control Panel, choosing System, clicking on the Device Manager tab and clicking the little plus-sign next to "Ports." Highlight the port in question and click on the Properties button, then on the Port Settings tab. Verify each of the settings, or click on the restore defaults button — just about every game that utilizes serial communications will function with this setting.

In DOS, issue the following command at the prompt to set your serial port properly: MODE COMX 9600,N,8,1 (where X is the number of the COM port you're using).

If the problem persists, try using a different port. Also, try more than one game to determine whether the problem is within a particular game or somewhere in the hardware. If you can obtain another cable, swap it with yours and try again. If all else fails, write down all of the steps you've gone through, and contact the technical support departments for the computers you're using.

Null Modem Connection

HIGHS: Simplicity, low price.

LOWS: Slowest connection there is; connection is limited to two computers.

THE LET-SOMEBODY-ELSE-DESIGN-IT METHOD

There are a few kits you can buy designed especially for game networking. The advantages of these are ease of use — somebody else did all of the engineering, designed the equipment and drivers, and boxed them up with instructions — and the fact that these networks can include more than two computers. Two such kits were tested for this article: The Moses FunWire and Apexx GameLan.

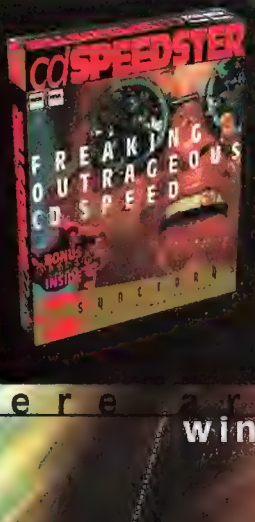
The Moses FunWire kit comes in two flavors: the Home Arcade ($49), which features internal interface cards, and the Party Kit ($69), which uses external adapters which attach to the computers' parallel ports. The units are then connected with telephone wire to form a network. Only two external adapters can reside on a FunWire network, however; while the internal cards have dual RJ11 (telephone) ports for the purpose of chaining computers together, the external versions have only one port. The parallel port interfaces are powered by external DC adapters, requiring an electrical outlet for each one.

The Apexx GameLan is a convenient, easy-to-use game networking kit.

While the FunWire kits worked fine, getting them installed was infuriating. The documentation is nothing short of awful; the user's guides, in the form of crudely drawn comic books, contain absolutely no technical detail, troubleshooting tips, or anything of that nature. A little more information can be found within the sparse and unfriendly text of the "Quick Install" guides, each of which consists of a single small sheet of paper.

Any form of networking is a at least a slightly complicated process, and FunWire's poor documentation does not prepare inexperienced users for all of the possible problems. For instance, in the Windows 95 "Quick Install" guide for the Home Arcade, the user is instructed to choose a free interrupt, DMA port, and I/O port from a list of possible configurations. This instruction is followed by, "If any of these resources is not available, then you must reconfigure one or more of the existing system components before continuing (refer to your Windows 95 documentation for help in reconfiguring your computers' resources)." And that's it. Considering that this kit boasts ease of use, it may seem to appeal to users who do not know that the Windows 95 off-line documentation provides no help in this matter, or that the online documentation does not offer much assistance with non-plug-and-play devices. Legacy expansion cards must be reconfigured through jumper settings or a software interface included with the device, so better information on reconfiguring them would be found in *their* documentation.

With the help of several years of PC networking experience, we managed to get a FunWire **LAN** up and running. The DOS portion of the software includes a nifty network startup



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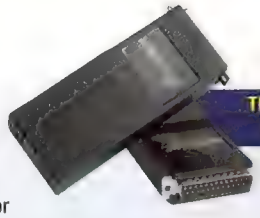
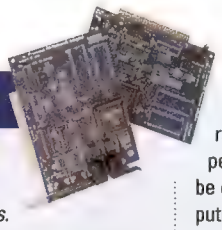




The Moses FunWire kits' poor documentation makes setting them up a nightmare

program that gives you a choice of network **protocols**: IPX (the more commonly supported protocol) or NetBIOS. The DOS-based FunWire network worked perfectly with every game tested on it. The same cannot be said for Windows 95 networking with the same equipment, however. Getting the devices to be recognized through Win 95 was a hassle, and both DOS and Win 95 games occasionally lost connection in the middle of play, even on a simple, two-computer network.

The Apexx GameLan line is definitely the better of the two kits reviewed here. This solution uses only parallel port adapters, relieving gamers of the need to open their PCs. The instructions are friendly and inclusive (then again, a court summons would be warm next to the FunWire documentation). GameLan also uses telephone wire to connect computers, but it can be daisy-chained through the parallel port adapters for as many as twelve computers on a network. Our GameLan network functioned flawlessly through both DOS and Win 95. In most cases, DOS-based games ran well through Win 95.

A nice feature is the GameLan's power source: Rather than rely on DC adapters, they utilize the PC's internal power through a keyboard pass-through connector (provisions are made for AT- and PS/2-style keyboards). An Apexx GameLan Starter Kit ($99.99) includes two adapters and a CD-ROM with a bunch of multiplayer shareware and demos, including *WarCraft II, Doom, Duke Nukem 3D* and *Advanced Tactical Fighters.* GameLan also offers an add-on kit ($49) with one adapter and drivers, but no games, so you can add more computers one at a time.

Network Kits

BOTH KITS

HIGHS: All inclusive, pre-engineered solutions.

LOWS: Data transfer too slow for non-game networking applications. Parallel models tie up parallel ports. Low bandwidth can be a source of lag with too many computers.

FUNWIRE KITS

HIGHS: Internal model keeps parallel port free.

LOWS: Terrible documentation. Poor Windows 95 performance. No game bundle.

APEXX GAMELAN KITS

HIGHS: Ease of use; no need to open the computers. Shareware game bundle. Highly recommended.

LOWS: High price.

THE DO-IT-YOURSELF SPECIAL

This article wouldn't be complete without a nod to that percentage of readers who puff out their chests, sneer, and say, "I'm not going to buy a *kit!* Kits are for sissies! Show me how it's *really* done!"

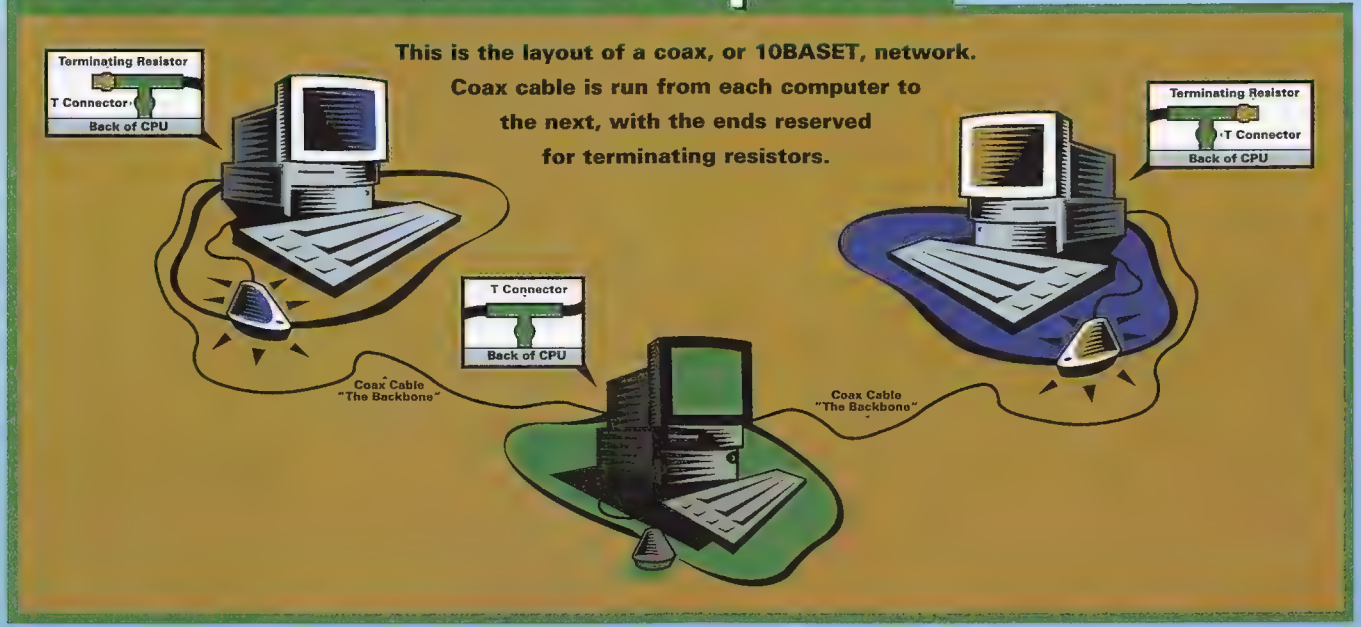
We'll try. But first, a few things that anyone who will attempt this should know: Reading this article will not turn you into a network engineer. People go to college for that. Volumes ten times the size of this magazine have been written about computer networking, with titles like "Basic Principles of LAN Implementation: Volume One of Twenty." Okay — that's a slight exaggeration, but the point is this: you should have some slight knowledge of PC networking before you attempt to build your own network from scratch.

Here, we'll be talking about the most simple type of LAN, a 10BASE2, peer-to-peer network. This is an Ethernet network, meaning, among other things, that it's capable of data transfer rates of 10Mbps (or Megabits per second). Basically, we will be connecting two or more computers to each other with a special type of coaxial cable, also referred to as 10BASE2, RG58 (two types of cable that are slightly different, but interchangeable), "thin net" or, mistakenly, BNC cable. The topology of this type of network is often called a "backbone," because the cable connects to each computer in series, resembling a backbone.

The first thing to acquire for this type of network is an appropriate number of network interface cards (NICs). Although the diagram only shows three computers, practical limits of a 10BASE2 segment are 30 nodes (computers) on 185 total meters of cable.

Each of the computers in the network will require a NIC with a special type of connector called a BNC connector. (BNC stands for bayonet connector, because this connector resembles the type used to connect bayonets to rifles.) You may see NICs with more than one type of connector; just make sure one of them is a BNC connector, and it should be fine. BNC NICs will include a little T-shaped connector called — of all things — a T-connector, which you will affix to the BNC connector on the NIC. NICS are available at most computer stores for anywhere from $20 for lesser-known brands to as much as $90 for well-known brands like 3COM or Kingston. A 16-bit ISA NIC will be sufficient for

The Do-It-Yourself Special

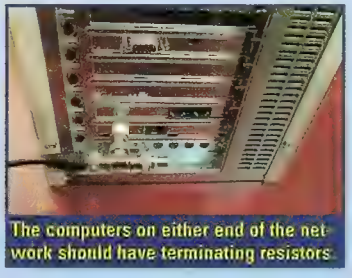

This is the layout of a coax, or 10BASET, network.
Coax cable is run from each computer to the next, with the ends reserved for terminating resistors.
Terminating Resistor
T Connector
Back of CPU
Terminating Resistor
T Connector
Back of CPU
T Connector
Back of CPU
Coax Cable "The Backbone"
Coax Cable "The Backbone"

the network we are building; PCI NICs do not offer any advantages on this type of network.

The cable we'll need to connect the computers can be 10BASE2 cable or RG58 cable. It looks like a thin version of the wire used for cable TV. It is usually available in various lengths of ten to 50 feet, complete with connectors on each end, for around $4 to $10 each.

Since Windows 95 includes built-in networking capabilities, the only other components necessary for a Win 95 network are 50-ohm terminating resistors. These are usually available in packs of two for $7 to $10. If you want to network in DOS, you'll need to buy peer-to-peer network client software, such as LANtastic. This type of product is usually sold by license; you can buy single-license boxes or multiple-license packs. This is where it can get expensive; two licenses can cost well over $100.

The NICs will come with installation instructions and software. Follow the directions closely. Determine what system resources they'll be using; some need an IRQ, a DMA, and an I/O address, others don't require the DMA. Find out how to set these on the NIC. Some are plug and play; others require you to set jumpers on the boards themselves, which you'll need to do before you insert them into a slot in your PC; still others are configured via software, and must be installed in a PC before they can be set up.



The computers on either end of the network should have terminating resistors.

Determine which resources you have free in each computer you plan to network. Use these to set up each NIC, if possible. If you must reconfigure your existing components, consult their documentation to learn how to do so and how to change their software drivers within the computer's operating system to match the new settings.

Once all of the NICS are set up and free of resource conflicts, power the computers down and connect the cables. Affix the T-connectors that came with the NICs to the BNC connectors on the NICs. The T-connectors each have two male BNC ports on them. Use lengths of coax cable to connect the computers: start with a computer on one end, and connect a cable from its T-connector to the next computer's T-connector. Then connect a cable from the other side of *that* T-connector to the next computer, and so on. When you're done, two of the computers should have one side of their T-connectors free. *Do not connect them into a circle!* That is where the two 50-ohm terminating resisters go. When you're done, the T-connectors of all of the computers should be attached in line with a terminating resistor on each end, just like in the diagram.

The basic equipment of a coax network, from left: coaxial cable, a network interface card, a t-connector, and a 50-ohm terminating resistor.

Now you can power up the PCs and install the networking software. For DOS networks, follow the instructions that came with the client software you purchased. Normally, this installs quite easily, and they may even have drivers for your NICs built in; if they don't, you'll be prompted for the driver disk that came with the NIC. Usually, client software will add one or more lines to your startup files to load different layers of networking drivers and protocols. Throughout the installation procedure, you will be asked to provide information such as computer names or the serial number of the client software. Each computers' name should be unique within a LAN; this is how the computers are identified within the network. If you're given a choice of protocols, choose IPX.

Windows 95 includes networking capabilities. With your NICs installed, invoke the Control Panel and double-click on Network. Click on the Add button, then highlight Adapter and click OK. Insert the diskette or CD-ROM that came with your NIC. In the next box, click Have Disk. You will be asked to enter a path or browse to the location of the Windows 95 drivers for your NIC. In most cases, they will be in a directory called Win95; check the documentation to be sure. Click on OK when you've entered the correct path, and the drivers will load.

You may need your Windows 95 diskettes or CD-ROM to complete the following steps. If, at any time, you're asked if you want to restart the computer, say No and proceed with the steps.

Click OK until you get back to the Network dialog box. Sometimes, Windows 95 will automatically add clients and protocols. Your goal is to have only these entries in the box labeled "The following network components are installed": Client for Microsoft Networks; a line about your NIC; IPX/SPX-compatible protocol; and, if you're interested in sharing files between computers, File and Printer Sharing for Microsoft Networks. Remove anything else by highlighting it and clicking the Remove button. Add File and/or Printer sharing by clicking the File and Printer Sharing button and checking the appropriate box(es).

A computer in the middle of the network.

If Client for Microsoft Networks is not in the component box, click Add. Highlight Client and click Add. The next dialog box will have two text boxes within it, next to each other horizontally. In the box on the left, click Microsoft, and in the box on the right click Client for Microsoft Networks and click OK.

If IPX/SPX Compatible Protocol is not one of the protocols in the Components box, click Add. Highlight Protocol and click Add. In the left box, click Microsoft, and in the right box click IPX/SPX-compatible protocol and click OK.

We're almost there! Now, in the Network dialog box, under Components, highlight IPX/SPX-compatible protocol and click Properties. On the NetBIOS tab, check the I want to enable NetBIOS over IPX/SPX box. That will enable both NetBIOS and IPX gameplay over the network. Click OK.

Last step: Click the Identification tab. Enter a computer name, workgroup name and, if you want, a computer description. The computer name must be different from the names of the other computers on the LAN, *but the Workgroup must be the same throughout the network.*

Now, click OK and let the computer reboot. Repeat this process for all of the computers on your LAN. If all goes well, you should now have a functioning 10BASE2 computer network. You can test this right away by double-clicking the new icon which will appear on each computers' desktop, called Network Neighborhood. Here you should see a list of computer names of the PCs on the LAN. Sometimes it takes a few minutes for computers to appear on this list, so don't panic if all of the computers don't show up immediately. Refresh the list by pressing F5 while Network Neighborhood is the active window.

Now, load up some games and blast each other to pieces!

Do-It-Yourself Network

HIGHS: Fast. Latency will not be a problem.

LOWS: Complicated. Can be more expensive than the others.

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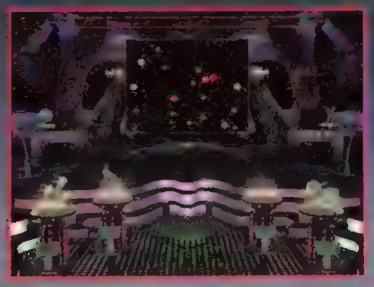

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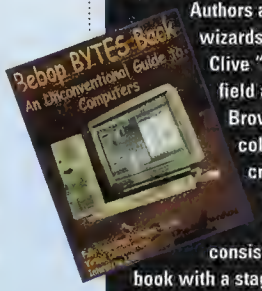
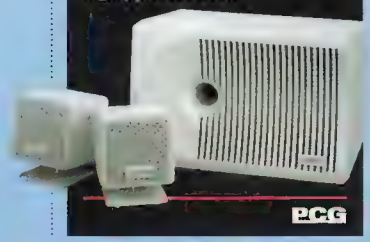


Authors and technical wizards extrordinare Clive "Max" Maxfield and Alvin Brown have collaborated to create *Bebop "Bytes" Back*, which consists of a huge book with a staggering amount of data about computer guts, all presented in language accessible to a novice. Best of all, the reader can follow along by running labs on their very own "Beboputer," a virtual computer compressed onto an included CD-ROM that runs in Windows 95.

More Speakers from Cambridge

The highly praised Cambridge SoundWorks has proven to many critics that great things come in small packages, and now Cambridge is back with another set of PC speakers to enforce the idea. The PC Works system will offer high-quality sound at an affordable price — the powered two-satellite-and-subwoofer set will sell for under $150, making it the least expensive of Cambridge's systems. Before striking a distribution deal with peripheral giant Creative Labs, the Cambridge name was mostly recognized only to audiophiles; since exploding onto the PC market, its line of computer speakers have become one of the most highly praised ever.



Intel Sued Again

MMX hit with a legal double-whammy

The processor market is beginning to look like the legal version of a third-world country. For the second time in as many months, Intel is in court simultaneously against two competitors.

The first round took place in early Spring, when, on March 14, Intel filed suit against its two chief competitors over use of the term "MMX." Cyrix and AMD were both poised to launch their respective responses to Intel's then-latest crop of processors, which added 57 new multimedia-centered instructions to the Pentium architecture. The competitors intended to use the term "MMX," an Intel trademark, in marketing their own chips.

Shortly after Intel was denied a restraining order on the other companies' use of the term, Cyrix agreed to an April 7 settlement with provisions for unlimited use of the trademark as long as they follow it with a "TM." AMD, however, kept up the fight until April 22, one week before a preliminary injunction was to be heard. Finally, AMD settled for a similar arrangement.

One month later, all seemed to be quiet. Then Digital Equipment Corporation and Cyrix filed patent infringement suits against Intel. The lawsuits came within half a day of each other, on May 12 and 13. In response, Intel counter-sued Digital on May 28.

The Digital suit involves ten patents issued between 1988 and 1996. Digital alleges that the Pentium Pro and Pentium II chips contain technology designed by Digital for use in their Alpha processors. The patents involve internal operations such as branch prediction and cache management.

Cyrix claims that Intel copied power management and pipeline techniques used in its 6x86 chips. Interestingly, the two patents named in the lawsuit were issued to Cyrix the same day the suit was filed. Unlike Digital, Cyrix sought an immediate injunction to prevent Intel from further marketing products with the technology in question, which would prevent the sale of the same Pentium processors named in the Digital suit.

Immediate speculation centered on the idea of each company not seeking legal victory, but some sort of licensing agreement or monetary agreement with the giant. In the case of Digital's legal action, the speculation was fueled by disappointing sales of its Alpha processors. In an interview published on the TechWeb site (*www.techweb.com*), Digital Chairman Robert Palmer denied that the lawsuit was frivolous. "I do not mind competing against Intel, but I would rather not compete against our own technology," he said. He accused Intel of holding a monopoly over the x86 chip market and indicated that the suit stood for more than upholding patent law. "It is about the right of companies to their innovations and the benefits that they produce."

Intel responded in part with a press release stating that they did not infringe on Digital's patents. "DEC has stated that technology is vital to its business. Technology is vital to Intel's business as well. Over the past three years, Intel has been issued nearly 1,000 patents for semiconductor, microprocessor, and other technologies. In conjunction with this effort, during that same period, Intel has spent over $4 billion for research and development."

Considering that microprocessors are inherently similar in many ways, analysts initially speculated that Intel might file counter-suits against the aggressors. Intel did indeed counter-sue Digital, but not for a patent infringement. Intel's suit cited violation of intellectual property rights, concerning confidential information about Intel products that they had transferred to Digital over the past few years. Intel supplies processors to Digital under a now-shaky business agreement.

What does it all mean? If either Digital or Cyrix are successful in stopping Intel from using the technology it allegedly stole, the result could be serious setbacks in Intel's future plans. The Pentium Pro and Pentium II processors would have to be redesigned from the ground up, which could take years. If the companies decide to seek monetary fines and are successful, the price tag could reach into the billions.

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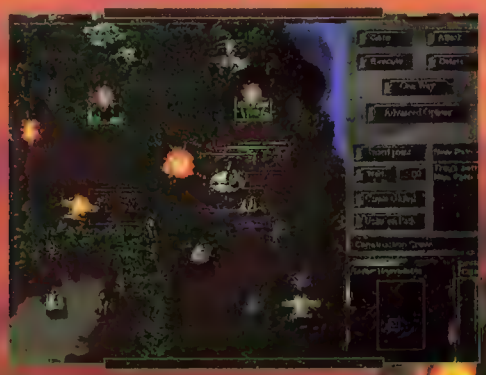

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Product Information Number 98

Micron Millennia MME

Company: Micron Electronics, Inc.
www.micronpc.com

Phone: (888) 349-6972

Prices: $2,948

Micron's new computer system will turn the eye of any self-respecting gamer, and then some!

Just being able to say you have a Pentium 233 MMX computer system sitting on your desk is fun. But when you add a Diamond Monster 3D video card (which uses the 3Dfx chipset), a 19" monitor, some thumpin' Advent AV370 speakers, and a ZIP drive for good measure, you've got a machine that won't just deal with your Excel spreadsheets, but makes *Quake* take on aspects of reality.

Out of the box, setup was a snap. Plug in the monitor, keyboard, mouse, joystick, and speakers, and you're ready to rock and roll. At a push of a button, the system started right up without a hitch, proving it had been properly configured and tested before shipping (not something you can take for granted with even the biggest system manufacturers). Several of the included programs come preinstalled, so you can just pop in a CD and start playing. Getting online with most of the big commercial services was easy, too — the system came set up with America Online, CompuServe, WOW, and AT&T's WorldNet. Of course, if you've already got another Internet Service Provider, you have to install and set up the Windows 95 Dial-Up Adapter on your own, a process that's rather complex for the uninitiated and involves installing drivers from the Windows 95 CD. Still, once you get it rolling, the 56Kbps modem runs like a charm, and the 'net is your oyster.

The 19-inch monitor automatically remembers settings stored for individual refresh rates, and it looks great, too!

The computer case itself is rather nicely packed, although there are only two drive bays open for expansion — one 3 1/2" bay and one 5 1/4" bay. And if you opt for the DVD add-on (the system we reviewed was shipped before the DVD-ROM pack was added), then you'll only have the single 3 1/2" bay available.

The keyboard works just as you'd expect it to — but for those of you who really care about such things, the tactile feel is quite nice, with a bit of a click, but nothing too loud. The Microsoft IntelliMouse works just as it should, and the Microsoft Sidewinder Pro joystick is its usual handy self. The system comes complete with several games: *POD* shows off the machine's MMX capability; *MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries* impresses your friends with the 3Dfx card's 3D acceleration and the "torso-twisting" feature of the Sidewinder Pro joystick; and Jane's Combat Simulations' fine flight sims, *USNF '97* and *Longbow Gold* are loads of fun. The package also has *Command & Conquer for Windows 95*, *Formula 1* from Bizarre Creations, and some utility programs like Microsoft's *Office '97 Small Business Edition*, *Adobe PhotoDeluxe*, *Blockbuster Entertainment's Guide to Movies and Videos*, and *Billboard's Guide to Music*. It also has *Eraser: Turnabout*, a game based on the movie *Eraser*.

Of course, the system also comes with all the setup discs for all the hardware, as well as the latest copy of Windows 95. Everything is installed, except for the *Microsoft Office 97* suite — strangely, if you want a word processor or spreadsheet (you *are* buying a machine for doing taxes and letters to the family, aren't you?), you'll have to put those on yourself. Maybe Micron knew some gamers wouldn't want any practical applications taking up valuable hard-drive real estate.

The Micron is one of the very few systems we've seen that actually turns itself off when you select "Shut Down" in Windows 95. Sure, the Macintosh has been doing it for years, but it's relatively new for a PC, and it's a nice little feature.

If you're looking for the nitty-gritty, here are some of the bootMark results we came up with during testing. The bootMarks, created by our sister magazine, *boot*, push the

They may not be the best top of the line speakers, but the Advent AV370s pump out enough sound to satisfy.

There isn't a whole lot unusual about the case, although the one-screw cover can be difficult to remove. At least the ports in back are labled clearly.

SYSTEM PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON LAUER

System Specs

ATCX Mini Tower Case
Intel 233 Pentium Processor with MMX
32MB (1-4M DIMM) SDRAM Memory
512K Pipeline Cache on Motherboard
2.1GB EIDE Hard Drive
PCI EIDE Controller on Motherboard
3.5" Floppy Drive
IOMEGA ZIP Drive
Micron 16V Variable EIDE CD-ROM Drive
Diamond Stealth 3D 2000 Pro with S3 ViRGE DX 4MB Video
Diamond Monster 3D Accelerator
Yamaha OPL3-SAx Sound System
19" Hitachi Multiscan Monitor (18" Viewable)
104 Key Enhanced PS2 Keyboard
MS IntelliMouse
MS Office 97 SBE with Multimedia Software
US Robotics 56K Faxmodem
Advent AV370 Speakers with Subwoofer
MS Windows 95 Plus Pack

computer to the limit and return numbers you can compare with other systems' scores to see how a given PC holds up. Running the SysMark 32 test, which pushes the system to the max in day-to-day business use, revealed a nice score of 185 overall — high even for a Pentium 233. Most of the other tests, such as CD-ROM speed and hard drive read/write access, came out only slightly higher than average — nothing extraordinary, but you won't be disappointed with its performance either.

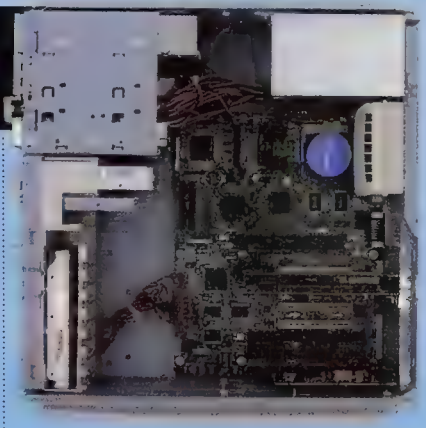
But what really matters (at least to those of you reading this magazine) is how well it did on the important software — the games. The *MDK PerfTest 1.4*, which tests the CPU and DirectX performance, came out at 104, where the average Pentium Pro 200 normally scores a 100 (you can thank the 3D accelerator for the extra performance).

At 640x480, *GLQuake* flew at 28.1 frames per second. With the Monster 3D video card, 3D performance is fantastic; *GLQuake*, *POD*, and *MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries* all looked stunning and ran as smooth as silk. Real-world testing of other games came back with excellent playability. *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* ran beautifully with all the details cranked up and 16-bit color, even over a direct modem connection for head-to-head play against a Pentium 100.

That little knob in the middle of the mouse is for scrolling down windows in MS Internet Explorer.

The one hurdle that tripped up the Micron came when it was time to reboot the computer into a pure MS-DOS mode. There are no real-mode 16-bit drivers for the CD-ROM drive and sound card. If you want a pure MS-DOS reboot, you'll have to find those real-mode drivers and configure them yourself. The drivers aren't included, but you can find the drivers and the information on how to configure them from the Micron web site at *www.micronpc.com*. This isn't something you should have to do, especially with an otherwise top-notch system. If only these system manufacturers would learn to put one or two MS-DOS reboot icons on the desktop!

Ultimately, the Millennia MME is a nice all-around system, with plenty of punch for anything you want to throw at it. The performance may not beat some other 233MHz MMX machines, and the lack of a pre-configured MS-DOS reboot session may annoy many gamers, but the system's excellent features and construction should silence most complaints.



Everything is clear and clean inside, although there's not many free bays for upgrades.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: The system is easy to set up and get running; the speakers sound great; comes with some cool games.

LOWS: There's no support for 16-bit real-mode drivers for an MS-DOS reboot; the Yamaha sound card can get fussy.

BOTTOM LINE: It's a nice system for the price, but there are better, more complete systems out there for just a little bit more.

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- Yamaha Sound System
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- Monitor Sold Separately

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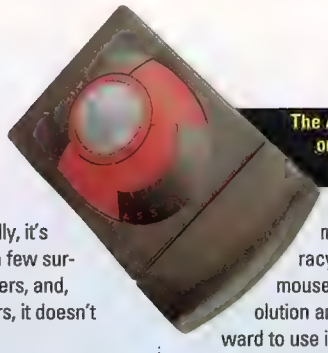
MEDIA ON

Product Information Number 230

Designed & Produced by arami design

Assassin 3D



The Assassin 3D may look like an ordinary trackball, but it's really a 3D game controller!

Company: First-Person Gaming, Inc.
www.fpgaming.com

Phone: (888) FPGAMING (TO ORDER)
(510) 494-2033 (TECH SUPPORT)

Prices: $59.95

To successfully complete the latest true-3D shooters (like *Quake* and *Hexen II*) — and, more importantly, to be competitive in deathmatches — you've got to turn, look up and down, jump, duck, sidestep, swim, fly, write a thesis, etc. All of these actions translate to an inconvenient number of keys to remember and find in a hurry. You can incorporate a mouse into your strategy, but that can be awkward.

Enter 3D controllers. Gamers' taste for controllers dedicated to first-person shooters was piqued with the success of the love-it-or-hate-it SpaceOrb 360.

Unlike the SpaceOrb or the upcoming Logitech CyberMan II, the Assassin 3D is not a complete 3D controller. Basically, it's a 3 button trackball, but it has a few surprises tailor-made for 3D shooters, and, unlike those other 3D controllers, it doesn't pack a huge learning curve.

Unlike standard trackballs, the Assassin 3D isn't a replacement for your mouse; it doesn't even plug into your mouse port. It's a fully digital controller that attaches to your game port, and it works in conjunction with your joystick; *any* joystick plugged into the Assassin 3D becomes a digital device (which means you get more precise calibration as a bonus). The Assassin adds three extra buttons and trackball-style viewpoint control in first-person shooters. While it's programmable, the ball is typically is used to look up and down and turn left and right; the joystick (or keyboard) controls forward and backward movement and sidestepping.

The Assassin has one advantage over a standard mouse or trackball; it gives you proportional control. That simply means that when you turn the ball 45 degrees, your viewpoint turns exactly 45 degrees. Put your thumb on one side of the Assassin's ball and whip it to the opposite side, and your onscreen counterpart will do a perfect 180 as quickly as you can move your hand. Similar accuracy can be achieved with a mouse, but only by tweaking its resolution and speed (and making it awkward to use in Windows).

The Assassin works with DOS and Windows 95 games, but each game requires its own specific driver. Support for new games is added to the Assassin web site as it becomes available. Software included with the Assassin consists of Win 95 joystick drivers for use with different joysticks (CH, Thrustmaster, generic, and none), a Win 95 mouse emulation program, a DOS overlay for use with DOS games, and support for a host of popular first-person shooters.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Versatile and easy to master; offers digital control with any joystick.

LOWS: Not a stand-alone 3D controller; requires unique driver for each new game.

BOTTOM LINE: The Assassin 3D takes control beyond the standard keyboard or joystick, and it's easier to learn than the new 3D controllers. It is not, however, a six axis monster like the controllers it competes against.

miroMedia Surround

The miroMedia Surround card brings genuine Dolby Surround sound to your computer — with games that support it.

Company: miroMedia Surround
www.miro.com

Phone: (800) 249-miro (TO ORDER)
(415) 855-0950 (TECH SUPPORT)

Prices: $99.95

Dolby sound has finally made it to the PC, and the difference it makes is simply amazing. Audiophiles already know why Dolby is such a familiar name in the world of high fidelity sound; Dolby has been setting the standard for high-quality stereo and surround sound for decades.

Recently, some computer games have begun to be recorded in Dolby Pro Logic, a surround sound scheme that can function with different combinations of speakers. miro's miroMedia Surround card is a Pro Logic decoder and more. The add-on board is not a sound card; it's an enhancement for your existing card. It fits into a standard 16-bit slot in your machine and comes with a patch cable you use to connect your sound card's output to the miro's input. The miro board provides five audio out jacks: Two 1/8 inch jacks — one for left/right front speakers and one for a pair of rear surround speakers; and three RCA jacks — two separate rear surround channels and one for a center channel.

The miro board has different modes, controlled through a software interface. Dolby Pro Logic mode provides for full, 5-speaker surround sound, which sounds *wonderful* with games that support it. miro encloses a demo of *Wing Commander IV*; it's almost a different game with true surround sound! Also available is the original, 4-speaker Dolby Surround format (left/right front and left/right rear, no center) and a 3-speaker mode (l/r front plus center). Other modes include a JVC 3D-Phonic mode, which is hypothetically supposed to produce surround effects with just two speakers; it seems to work like most two-speaker "surround" technologies, widening the stereo field by reducing speaker crosstalk. Several options under this mode add echo effects to emulate different room sizes. Yet another mode, Wide Stereo, is largely indistinguishable from 3D-Phonic mode.

While installation and use of the miroMedia board were simple, the major problem is that there are not a lot of games which utilize the Dolby Pro Logic format. According to Dolby's home page, at press time the list was about 25 titles long. Now Dolby Digital, the successor to Pro Logic, is emerging as a new standard for movies and music, and other advancements in positional 3D, such as A3D and Qsound, are luring PC game developers away from the Dolby standards.

The miroMedia Surround is a well designed enhancement to a PC, especially if it's owned by an audio enthusiast.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Excellent Dolby sound. Installs easily and is simple to use. 5-speaker surround sound is great with the games that support it.

LOWS: Not a lot of *game* support. Non-Dolby effects are weak.

BOTTOM LINE: This well-designed board works great as a Dolby Pro Logic device; if that's important to you or you're an audio enthusiast, check it out.

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Product Information Number 311

Win 95 is *cool*, but *sucks* with DOS games!

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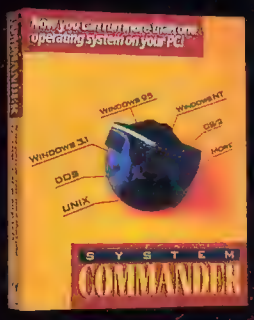

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BYTE April 1996

PC MAGAZINE BEST OF 1996 Jan 7, 1997

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Product Information Number 357

DVD PC-to-TV

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Company: Hi-Val
www.hival.com

Phone: (714) 953-3000 (TO ORDER)
(888) DVD-HIVAL (TECH SUPPORT)

Prices: $849.99

This full featured upgrade kit from Hi-Val easily proves that DVD lives up to the hype.

Long, long ago, in 1982, at the dawn of the PC age, data was stored on big, black, five-and-a-quarter-inch floppy disks. They were fragile and unwieldy and held 360K of data (or less). "Boy," said the people who had spent hundreds of dollars on huge, external floppy drives to replace their slower and less capacious tape drives, "they sure hold a lot! I'll *never* need more than ten of these babies!"

Here in 1997, the first DVD-ROM upgrade kits are trickling onto the shelves of computer stores. To put this development into perspective, one side of a current DVD-ROM disc can hold as much information as more than 15,000 of those 360K 5.25" floppy disks. DVD devices are expected to replace CD technology altogether.

The Hi-Val DVD PC-to-TV can help you do that right now. This versatile kit not only provides a computer DVD-ROM drive, but also throws in a wireless transmitter/receiver set to send DVD signals to another entertainment device in your house, such as a good, old-fashioned television or a home theater system.

The Hival DVD PC-to-TV kit includes a Toshiba DVD-ROM drive.

Like most other DVD-ROM upgrade kits, the Hi-Val includes an IDE, internal DVD-ROM drive, a PCI board for MPEG-2 and Dolby Digital decoding, software, and the necessary cables to connect everything. With the help of the informative instruction book, the unit was up and running in a matter of minutes. The kit was tested in a Pentium 200 with MMX and 32 MB of EDO RAM; be aware that the Hi-Val DVD kit requires a meaty system for decent performance: the box recommends Windows 95 running on a P166 with a PCI **bus master,** 8 MB or more RAM, and a PCI video card. Nearly all current system boards are capable of bus mastering, but a few older PCI boards were not; check with your board manufacturer to be sure.

The drive worked flawlessly in our tests. It read legacy CD-ROMs and audio CDs just fine, and, of course DVD-ROMs. Performance is comparable to a 12x CD-ROM drive. Hi-Val includes a generous bundle DVD-ROMs, including *Wing Commander IV, the Daedelus Encounter, Silent Steel, Muppet Treasure Island,* and *Spycraft* (each of which occupy one single-sided DVD — even *WC4*), a DVD-only encyclopedia called *Electronica,* and an IMAX movie called *Africa: the Serengeti.*

Video and audio quality were stunning, provided the content had been altered or created to take advantage of everything that the DVD standard has to offer. For instance, *Wing Commander IV* was simply shoveled from CD to DVD, so the video was still interlaced. But since the original *WC4* was recorded in Dolby, the addition of a decoder made listening to the game a religious experience.

DVD movies are controlled through a DVD player interface included in the software package. It's intuitive and full-featured, offering control of volume, fast forward, reverse, subtitles, language, and view angle (if the movie supports it), plus a host of other controls. Movies look beautiful windowed on the PC monitor. Initially, when they were bumped up to full screen mode, a little bit of pixelation crept in, but this was remedied by some minor tweaks suggested by Hi-Val's excellent technical support.

If you haven't experienced movies on DVD, you may not want to, because once you do, you'll come to resent your VCR for its lack of state-of-the-art sound and picture clarity. The PC-to-TV kit makes it possible to get rid of it, though — at least, for *watching* movies. Included in the kit is a WAVECOM Sr. RF-Link. This consists of two little black boxes that look like miniature sci-fi vehicles. A transmitting unit connects to the two-way stereo and video outputs of the Hi-Val decoder card. The receiver can then be plugged into any device with RCA or TV coax input capability.

Setting up the WAVECOM was genuinely easy. Its range is listed at 300 feet, and sound and video clarity is excellent. At longer ranges, the audio signal began to break up more quickly than the video. WAVECOM also has an IR channel that can carry a remote control signal from the receiving end to the transmitter — but the Hi-Val DVD-ROM is not remote controlled; if your TV is in the living room and the computer's in the den, you'll have to run into the other room to control the movie if you watch it on the tube. Furthermore, while a movie is playing on the television, both the TV *and* the computer are in use; Dad can't play *Interstate '76* while Mom watches *Blade Runner.* If the WAVECOM doesn't sound like something you need, take note: Hi-Val offers a kit without the WAVECOM for two hundred dollars less than the PC-to-TV.

A screen shot from *Africa: The Serengeti,* seen on a PC as clear as a television.

If you want to be the first one on your block with a DVD drive, this is where you start. With the WAVECOM removing the need for a separate DVD player for your TV, you stand to save a bundle on equipment. The best PC upgrades install easily and work perfectly with little fuss; for DVD, Hi-Val has done it right the first time.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Installs easily and works perfectly. Good tech support. Excellent picture and sound quality. Can be used on PC and TV simultaneously.

LOWS: Steep price. Wireless device sharing can be inconvenient.

BOTTOM LINE: The Hi-Val DVD PC-to-TV upgrade kit is nothing short of excellent. If you're ready to jump on the DVD bandwagon, this is the way to go.

RealVision Flash 3D

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Company: RealVision
www.windsoronline.com/flash3d/index.html

Phone: (519) 734-8032 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $149

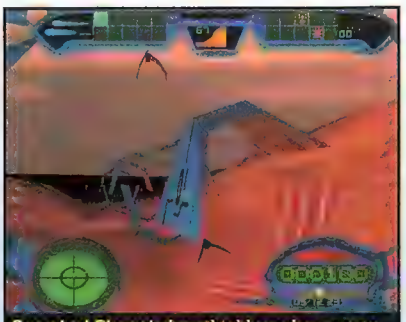
Game developers and gamers alike are still in awe of the incredible effects and frame rates that boards based on the 3Dfx Voodoo chip offer; any time a new 3D accelerator chip is introduced, you'll probably hear it being compared to the Voodoo. And if you haven't played *GLQuake*, the 3Dfx accelerated version of id's hit 3D shooter, then you are really missing out on a visual feast.

The major drawback to 3Dfx boards has been their relatively high prices. A 3Dfx Voodoo card is not an all-in-one solution; it's an add-on to your existing 2D card. At an average price of $200 to $250, 3Dfx cards have made middle-of-the-road 2D/3D cards based on S3's all-in-one ViRGE chipset seem more attractive, and yet 3Dfx boards have sold very well with the hard-core gaming crowd.

RealVision's Flash 3D goes a long way toward making 3Dfx graphics more attractive than ever. This is a typical 3Dfx add-on board with 4MB of VRAM, but it carries the lowest price we've seen — and nothing is lost in performance. In fact, in the bootMarks *TerraMark* test, it scored marginally higher than Diamond's Monster 3D; this could be attributed as much to the quality of the drivers as to the board itself.

The Flash 3D has all the same plusses and minuses as any 3Dfx board: it's not a 2D accelerator, so it won't speed up Windows, but it plays all of the popular 3Dfx and Direct3D accelerated games beautifully, purring with fluid animation.

Apparently, RealVision chose to cut cost in the bundle department. The Flash 3D does not come with any full games at all, and only two demos are included. They're fairly good games, though — *Scorched Planet* and *CyberGladiators* — and they show off the power of the card to great effect. There are also a number of 3Dfx demos and test utilities on the single CD-ROM, including the GL patch for *Quake*.



Scorched Planet is breathtaking when run on the RealVision Flash 3D.

Buy a RealVision Flash 3D if: 1) You want the very best in current 3D acceleration; 2) you already have a good 2D video card, or plan to purchase one in tandem, and 3) bundled games are not a concern. The price is right, and it's worth every cent.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Awesome price for an incredible 3D solution. Easy install.

LOWS: No perks. Absolutely no full games bundled, and only two demos.

BOTTOM LINE: The RealVision Flash 3D is a bare-bones 3Dfx board. There are other, more expensive equivalents with more stuff thrown in, but if the extras aren't a big concern for you, then this is the board you want.

Panasonic EAB MPC250

Company: Panasonic
www.panasonic.com

Phone: (800) 742-8086 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $149

The speakers included with most new PCs are one of the first components that users target to upgrade: They lack power, or they reproduce sound as if it's coming from the bottom of a well. However, high performance speaker systems like those from Bose or Cambridge Soundworks often carry sticker prices that shock everybody except serious audiophiles.

Panasonic offers a happy medium in its EAB MPC250 multimedia speaker system. Don't let the unfortunate name or the tiny footprint scare you: this is a pretty nice outfit for a good price.

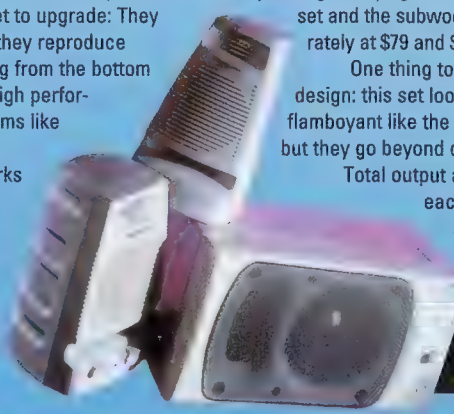
The set is comprised of three components: two triangular satellite speakers housing midrange drivers and tweeters, and a floor based subwoofer. Controls for the satellites, on the right speaker, are limited to on/off, treble and volume, and the subwoofer power and volume controls are on its front panel. This is typical, but annoying: if you want to adjust the sub, you have to crawl on the floor unless you've got very agile toes. The two speaker set and the subwoofer are sold separately at $79 and $129 respectively.

One thing to be noted is the design: this set looks cool. They're not flamboyant like the popular Lansing line, but they go beyond dull, square boxes.

Total output adds up to 30 watts: each of the speaker units are capable of five watts and the sub is ten. This is plenty of power if you intend to use them in an smaller room or den, but if you want to rock the house down, look for something bigger.

Sound quality is above average. The subwoofer gives a very nice depth to the bass, but the sound above the desk pulls toward the middle frequencies. You'll find that with the treble control must be set exactly in the middle: a slight twist makes response tinny or muffled.

The Panasonic EAB MPC250 is a nice, middle of the road speaker system. If good sound is important to you but you're not ready to spend over $300 dollars for high performance, check it out.



The Panasonic EAB MPC250 multimedia speaker set is streamlined and attractive.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Fairly attractive and streamlined design. Nice bass kick from the subwoofer. Attractive price.

LOWS: Middle of the road sound. Touchy treble control. Inconvenient subwoofer volume.

BOTTOM LINE: These middle-of-the-road speakers are a nice upgrade from a pair of cheapies, and you'll have money left over to spend on — what else? — games.

MAN OF WAR

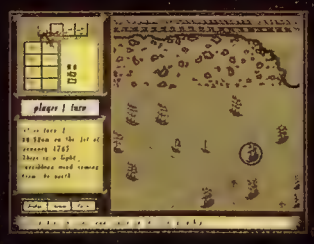
"MAN OF WAR petitions those aspects of battle many wargames are still dreaming of properly addressing."
Evan Brooks/Computer Game Entertainment

"The graphics are phenomenal"
Bill Trotter/TC Gamer

Return to a time when land was won at sea...

Set during the age of fighting sail, when the oceans echoed with cannon shot and splintering timber, MAN OF WAR's 3D first-person perspective lets you experience first hand the saga of an Admiral's life at sea. With a fleet of ships in your charge and a nation's fate in the balance, bear witness to the consequence of your command and change the course of history.

. 3D Rendered Graphics . Large Scale Fleet Actions . First-Person Perspective



(Actual in-game graphics)

ON "SAIL" IN AUGUST

Product Information Number 320

SIMULATIONS CANADA

STRATEGY FIRST INC.

KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PC-CD ROM

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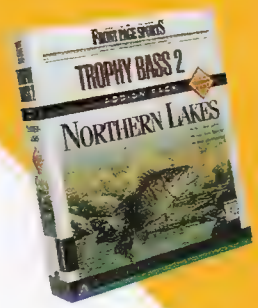
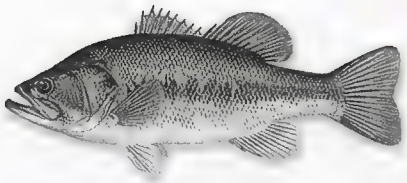
Look for Trophy Bass 2's NEW Add-On Pack!

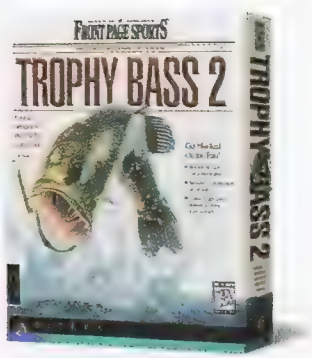
5 New Fish, 5 New Lakes, & New Tournament Types.





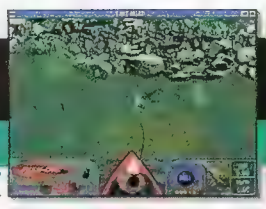
[Bass]

[Bass on line]



[On line Bass]

Only one experience comes close to the excitement of hooking a trophy-size bass. And that's landing a 19-pounder in Trophy Bass 2™, the most addictive fishing simulation ever. Now with Internet, modem and network play, you can compete with neighbors or in worldwide tournaments. Get tips from the pros. Select from thousands of realistic items—the gear, the lake, the weather—but be forewarned, you're the one who'll get hooked.



SIERRA®

Visit us at http://www.sierra.com, AOL, or Compuserve. To order Trophy Bass 2™ call 1-800-757-7707

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Product Information Number 310

MaxiSound Game Theater 64

Company: Guillemot International
www.guillemot.com

Phone: (800) 967-0863 (TO ORDER)
(415) 547-4028 (TECH SUPPORT)

Prices: $199

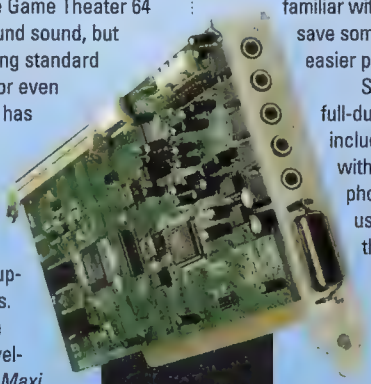
A long-time producer of European multimedia equipment unleashes a sound card that's bound to make waves in America.

Guillemot International has been producing multimedia products in Europe for more than ten years, and during that time they've forged quite a name for themselves. Recently, they launched a new line of high-quality sound cards, and, after signing on Ubi Soft for distribution, they decided to try their luck in the good old USA.

The MaxiSound line consists of two products: The Home Studio Pro 64, which specializes in high-end production and editing, and the Game Theater 64, reviewed here. This meaty sound card has more features than many higher priced alternatives.

The Game Theater is a complete 16-bit sound solution with crystal-clear digital reproduction and 64-voice wavetable synthesis, upgradable with a daughterboard. The basic card comes with 4MB of RAM for uploading different MIDI instrument sets (similar to Creative Lab's Sound Fonts); a 72-pin SIMM socket that takes standard DRAM lets you add more memory. The card is fully compatible with Sound Blaster, DirectSound, general MIDI, Roland MPU-401, and most other established PC audio standards. The card installed easily, but chose an interrupt under Plug-and-Play that most older DOS games would be unable to recognize: IRQ 9. IRQ 5, the long-time standard, had been freed up before the installation of the Game Theater, but the configuration had to be manually tweaked to get it there.

Once installed, it would have been difficult not to spend a few minutes marveling at the quality of sound this card puts out. The clarity is amazing, even through an old pair of Labtec speakers. Output range is 4KHz-44.1KHz. The back of the card contains the usual connectors (game port, line in, speaker out, and line out) with one notable addition: surround out. The Game Theater 64 will do four-speaker surround sound, but rather than utilize an existing standard like Dolby Surround, A3D, or even DirectSound 3D, Guillemot has developed its own API. It's effective, which you'll find if you play the lone game bundled in the package (*POD*, amazingly enough), but unlikely to be widely supported by game developers.



The MaxiSound Game Theater 64 is a surprisingly powerful sound card.

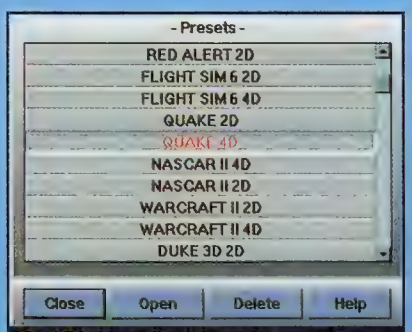
Guillemot has its own answer to this. They've developed an application called *Maxi FX* that adds surround effects, as well as echo and reverb-intensive atmospheric sound, to existing games. Enhancements for 50 current games are included with the program, with more to be posted on Guillemot's home page. Overall, it does enhance gaming somewhat; with *Maxi FX* enhancements, *Quake* sounds hollow and ominous, *Duke Nukem 3D* crisp and clear. With four speakers, *Maxi FX* separates certain frequencies and plays them through the rear set. Technically, it's surround sound only in that you hear tones from all sides; it would be impossible to add true positional sound to titles that weren't written to incorporate it, but this is as close as you can get; it really sounds like you're in your *TIE Fighter*.

In leiu of more games, MaxiSound Game Theater includes a host of sound editing utilities. Any of the game enhancements can be edited, and new overlays can be created through the *Maxi FX* program. Also included is Midisoft's *Audio Works Pro*, a mixer front-end with wave-editing capabilities. If you're familiar with typical wave file editing programs, you'll be familiar with the features and effects offered here: volume and amplitude can be adjusted, effects such as reverse, echo and reverb, flange, and distortion can be added or tweaked. Also included is *Cakewalk Express*, a MIDI composition tool that lets you create and edit instrument banks and play them to create MIDI compositions. Just in case you don't have a MIDI guitar, there's a program included called *Virtual Piano* that causes your keyboard to emulate its musical namesake. This program is a bit difficult to use, and documentation is not thorough; would-be musicians not already familiar with MIDI editing may want to save some aggravation and seek an easier program to learn with.

Since the Game Theater is a full-duplex device, Guillemot also included *Internet Phone*, which, with the sound card, a microphone and speakers, can be used to make phone calls via the Internet.

Everything worked smoothly and well, until the time came to test the Game Theater 64 in DOS mode. The boxed software did not include any real-mode drivers for the Game Theater. A telephone call remedied this; a representative was able to E-mail the necessary drivers and promised that they would be made available on the company's web site and would be included with future packages. The file we received installed effortlessly and worked well, with one stipulation: for legacy games, only two compatibility modes are offered: SoundBlaster Pro (which is 8-bit only) and ESS Audiodrive (which is not commonly supported).

The MaxiSound Game Theater 64 is a high-performance sound card with a wealth of excellent utilities and features. Its lack of a games bundle and poor DOS compatibility may turn off some gamers, but casual musicians or anyone who wants excellent sound clarity with dynamic features will be delighted.



Maxi FX adds audio richness to current games.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Excellent, clear sound. Supports two or four speakers. Generous bundle of audio utilitites...

LOWS: ...which left room for only one mediocre game. Installation may require some tweaking for legacy game compatibility.

BOTTOM LINE: This is a very nice, full featured sound card for gamers and PC music enthusiasts, and it's offered at an excellent price for all of its features.

Logitech Cordless Mice

Company: Logitech
www.logitech.com

Phone: (510) 795-8500 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $79 (MOUSEMAN PRO)
$99 (SURFMAN)

Flare and functionality are flaunted to the extreme in this pair of cordless mice, but only one of them is really worth a look.

Consider the mouse. No, not the one running around behind your refrigerator, the *computer* mouse. It's a simple device with a very basic function. Mice are so common and similar today that they're pretty much taken for granted by users; you just reach for it, and it's there. When the time comes to shop for a new one, however, it's rather startling to see the massive number of mice you can choose from. Most of the market can be segmented into two categories: practical or gimmicky. Logitech's line of cordless mice, including the MouseMan Pro and the SurfMan, hits both extremes.

Both of the three-button devices reviewed here installed easily and worked flawlessly. In both cases, a base unit plugs into your PC's mouse port; provisions are made for both PS/2 and serial ports. The mice themselves are powered by AAA batteries, which are included in the package. Both are fully compatible with any generic mouse driver, and they function fine in Windows 95 and DOS environments. One interesting feature that sets these mice apart from the crowd (other than, of course, their cordlessness) is the base unit's ability to receive the signals of more than one cordless mouse. By choosing one of four frequency channels, two mice can be set to the same frequency and used on the same computer.

The gimmicky member of this pair is called SurfMan, which is billed as a "cordless Internet controller." What it actually is is a slick-looking handheld remote control with three mouse buttons and a little trackball reminiscent of those found on some laptops. It fits nicely in the hand, and the controls are in easy reach of a right or left-handed thumb. The six-foot range is plenty if you're using it with a desktop PC, but insufficient for a living room setup.

The aerodynamic SurfMan is pretty, but not very useful.

This controller would be nice for presentations (or some other application that absolutely *requires* a bit of distance from the computer) but it's not a practical replacement for a good, old-fashioned mouse. Drag-and-drop operations are a pain; you'll probably have to use both hands, holding a button with one and moving the trackball with the other.

Since both of the mice here are packaged with Logitech's MouseWare program, which lets you program the mouse buttons for a bunch of different functions, the drag-and-drop problem can be solved by programming one of the buttons with "DragLock." As an Internet controller, SurfMan's fine, but when you're a few feet away from your computer and decide to surf over to a search engine — or anything else requiring you to input text — you suddenly realize that it's *not* a cordless keyboard (and you begin to understand why those set-top Internet boxes are no substitute for a PC).

The MouseMan Pro is the Surfman's practical counterpart. It's perfect: quite simply, it's a desktop mouse without the cord. That's it. It doesn't have any special features that the rest of Logitech's mice don't offer — and it doesn't *need* them. That may sound simple, but freedom from wrestling with a mouse cord, especially in a cramped work space, is much more liberating than you might think. Nothing is lost in terms of response or precision, either in Windows or in reflex-intensive environments like *Quake*. The MouseMan Pro's range is considerably shorter than the SurfMan's, but that's not an issue since it's not intended to be carried away from the computer. While the MouseMan Pro's odd shape makes it unfriendly to a southpaw, Logitech also offers a cordless version of the familiar MouseMan.

The MouseMan Pro is simple and effective.

If your work area is tight or your mouse cord frequently gets in your way, check out the Logitech MouseMan Pro. Don't bother with the SurfMan, though; it's all looks and no brains.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: *SurfMan:* Looks really neat, works well in the left or right hand. *MouseMan Pro:* Awesome! Every bit as good as a corded mouse — without the cord.

LOWS: *SurfMan:* Awkward to use. Drag-and-drop functions are difficult. *MouseMan Pro:* Weird shape takes some getting used to.

BOTTOM LINE: The SurfMan has little practical value, except perhaps for presentations. The MouseMan Pro, on the other hand, is a reliable, responsive cordless mouse.

TOMB RAIDER

Have you got yours yet?

If you know **Tomb Raider**, you know why **Lara Croft** is the #1 cover girl in gaming. No other game has won more awards, delivered more action-packed realism, or kicked more ass. Hardcore gamers have made **Tomb Raider** the undisputed megahit of the year. Have your got yours yet?

Action Game of the Year
Best Graphics of the Year
95% Rating
-PC Gamer

Game of the Year
Rated 5 out of 5 Stars
-Computer Games Strategy Plus

Game of the Year
Rated 10 out of 10
-Computer and Net Player

Lara Croft, gaming's #1 covergirl.

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Product Information Number 131

Tech Q&A

We've got lots of great questions this month, and lots of great answers (if we do say so ourselves), so get to it!

Q I've got a dilemma. My computer is only a little over a year old and out of date already. It's a P100 with 16MB of RAM and a 1.2GB hard drive, and no 3D video. I bought it so I could play games, and when I bought it for $2,500, I could play all of the games in the store. Now they all want P133 or P166, and many don't look that good without a 3D card.

Now I see in your magazine that I will need MMX for games later this year, and my CD-ROM drive won't be any good when everything is on DVD. And why should I get a P200 with P233s coming out, and then Pentium II? Then I will need an AGP video card, so why should I buy a 3D card now?

As you can see my point is, why do they make all this stuff? No matter what you buy, it's out of date. And soon, nothing will work with what you got. People spent just as much money on 386 computers, or even ATs, and now look at them. Will there ever be computers that last more than 6 months?

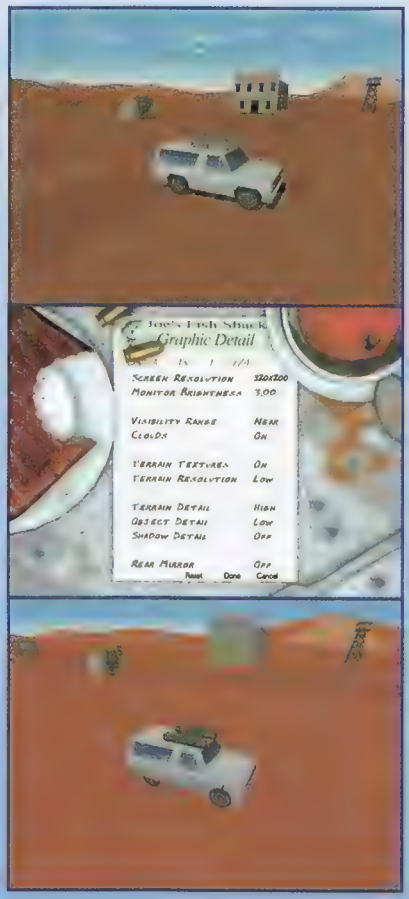
Game companies should realize that not everybody is going to buy a new computer every time a new chip is made. They should write games for computers that people already have.

Oh, and I love the mag! Please tell computer companies to slow down, and let us catch up!!

—Jason Werth, via the Internet

A You're certainly not the only computer enthusiast to make that request, Jason. It's a tough knock when you spend thousands of dollars on a sophisticated piece of equipment only to find it outdated in 18 months or less.

The problem is, microcircuitry is still considered a relatively new technology, which means research will continue to bring about advancements for years to come. As computer hardware technology improves, software, including games, is written to take advantage of the new capabilities. Why? Because by using the latest in computer technology, game companies can make better games. Compare *Quake*, a popular game that requires a Pentium, to *Doom*, which ran perfectly on a 486, or *Wolfenstein 3D*, a 386 game. If id had stuck with programming for the 386, *Quake*, one of the most popular games to come out in years, would've looked like a souped-up version of *Wolfenstein 3D!* Likewise, compare *Wing Commander IV* to the original, or look at *JetFighter III* next to *F15 Strike Eagle*.



It may not *look* as luscious, but turning down the detail makes *Interstate '76* more playable on older machines.

The unstoppable advancement of technology is not limited to computers, either. Automobile makers didn't stop at Model Ts; they're constantly trying to improve gas mileage and performance of their vehicles. Athletic footwear has advanced beyond Keds. And remember when a Mr. Coffee was a neat new idea? The coffee machine here in the Imagine Publishing office is so smart, it dispenses two different blends of coffee in three different strengths, plus mocha or hot cocoa!

The point: the goal of technological advancement is not to bleed us dry, but to create new devices and appliances that can do more, better, than what we have now. That can be an inconvenience when you discover that *Interstate '76* doesn't really look its best unless it's run on a very fast machine with lots of RAM, but in the long run, the result is bigger, better, prettier games.

In most cases, games cater to older machines by allowing different elements of graphic detail to be turned down or off. Although the game won't look as nice, it will play much more smoothly. A P100 may not meet recommendations of many new games, but it still meets the minimum requirement of most of what's out there. If you buy a game now and play it with the graphics turned down, sometime down the road when you *do* upgrade to a more powerful machine, it'll be a pleasure to dust off all of your old games and see what they really have to offer. (That's what we did when we got our P166s!)

Q I'm writing in response to the letter written to you by Mark Wallace in the June issue in the tech Q&A colulmn.

Your response to Mark's letter was to use EMM386, and that *Memmaker* was not included with Windows 95. While Emm386 will work on some older MS-DOS programs, there are others that insist on having more free conventional memory. I had that problem with running the *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary Enhanced CD* in DOS mode.

You can find *Memmaker* and its related files on the Win 95 CD, in the folder called "other\oldmsdos." You have to copy the files from the CD; I created a DOS folder on my hard drive to copy them to. You should add the DOS folder to your path statement in the AUTOEXEC.BAT file, too. Don't forget to make copies of your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files before you start, in case you have problems. It worked great for me, loading my CD-ROM driver and mouse drivers into high memory, freeing up conventional memory so I could run the game. If you are not familiar with using *Memmaker*, there's online help included with it also.

—Paul Nicholas, via the Internet

A Thanks for the tip, Paul. *Memmaker* is included on the Windows 95 CD-ROM, but that does not mean it's available to everybody with Win 95. *Memmaker* is *not* included on the floppy disk version of Windows 95. Also, in some cases where a computer came with Windows 95 preinstalled and does not include a separate CD-ROM, files in the "\oldmsdos" folder may not have been included.

Q I loved your best 50 games of all time feature in the May issue and decided to go out and try and hunt down a few of the games on it. During my travels I uncovered The Complete *Ultima VII* for about $16 in a discount bin. The problem is, the game runs too fast on my computer, an old P75. Is there any way I can slow down my computer to make the game playable? (And, yes, I *did* try turning off the Turbo switch!)

—Chris Bucholz, via the Internet

A Are you positive that it's not your reflexes that have slowed down? That's happening to us every day. In any case, it just so happens that we have the utility you need right on our web site! It's called *Mo'Slo* and lets you adjust your processor speed to a percentage of its awesome power and play older games the way they were meant to be played. Best of all, it's freeware! This utility only works in DOS mode, however. Visit *www.pcgamer.com/utility.html* and download the file MOSLO.ZIP.

Q I am looking into buying a new system, and after reading your article on the Falcon Mach V in the June issue, I have a question. Will dedicated gaming machines run things like *MS Office*, *Encarta*, the Internet, etc.? I am sure they will run these particular applications, but how well? Also, how well will they run output devices and input devices like printers, scanners, digi-cams, etc.?

—Ronald Burris, via the Internet

A Your confusion is understandable, Ronald. When a computer is referred to as a "gaming machine," it just means (hopefully) that particular PC has been outfitted with better game-related hardware than the average computer: fast video, 3D acceleration, MMX, a good sound card, drivers for both DOS and Windows 95, and so on. Since games require better performance than most general applications, a good gaming PC will often run office-type applications *better* than the average bear.

Q I just read your advice to Tom Mulet in the June 1997 (Vol. 4, No. 6) edition of *PC Gamer*. If he follows your advice, he will lose many of his system settings and Windows customizations, since this copy operation will not copy the system registry. The same will happen if you back up to tape and then install a new hard drive. There are two good software solutions I know of to get around this: the first is a shareware program called *Ghost* (*www.ghostsoft.com*). The second is *Partition Magic 3.0* from PowerQuest.

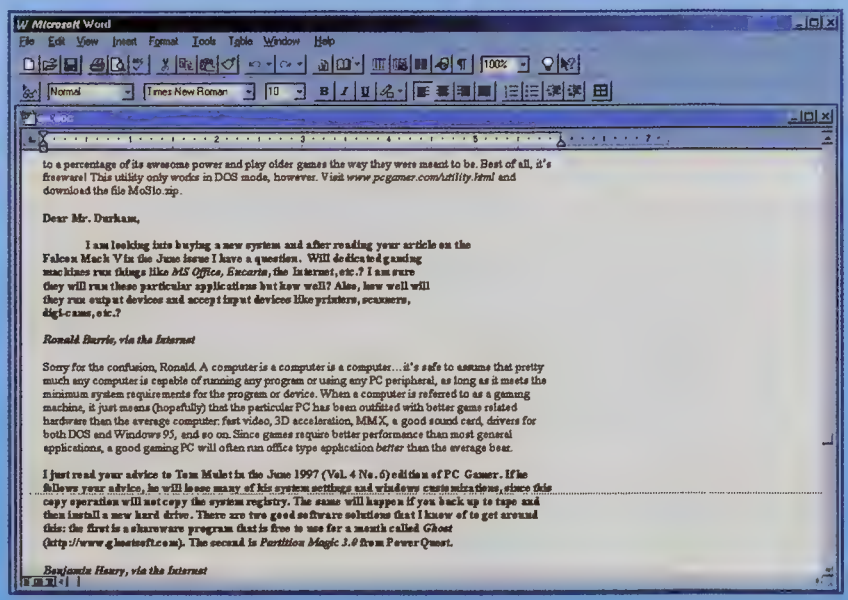
—Benjamin Henry, via the Internet

A As it turns out, the method for hard drive cloning published in the Hard Stuff does not always work. Although it has been used successfully by staff and readers alike, many cases have been brought to our attention in which the registry didn't gracefully make the conversion. In such cases, both of the utilities Benjamin mentions are reliable and easy to use. Please note, though, that some tape backup software *will* back up the Windows registry, either by itself or within a complete backup set.

Need Help?

If you have a hardware question or comment, write to us at:
The Hard Stuff, *PC Gamer*, 150 North Hill Drive, Suite 40, Brisbane, CA 94005

or send E-mail to:
jdurham@pcgamer.com


Microsoft Word
File Edit View Insert Format Tools Table Window Help
Normal
Times New Roman
to a percentage of its awesome power and play older games the way they were meant to be. Best of all, it's freeware! This utility only works in DOS mode, however. Visit www.pcgamer.com/utility.html and download the file MoSlo.zip.
Dear Mr. Durham,
I am looking into buying a new system and after reading your article on the Falcon Mach V in the June issue I have a question. Will dedicated gaming machines run things like MS Office, Encarta, the Internet, etc.? I am sure they will run these particular applications but how well? Also, how well will they run output devices and accept input devices like printers, scanners, digi-cams, etc.?
Ronald Burris, via the Internet
Sorry for the confusion, Ronald. A computer is a computer is a computer...it's safe to assume that pretty much any computer is capable of running any program or using any PC peripheral, as long as it meets the minimum system requirements for the program or device. When a computer is referred to as a gaming machine, it just means (hopefully) that the particular PC has been outfitted with better game related hardware than the average computer: fast video, 3D acceleration, MMX, a good sound card, drivers for both DOS and Windows 95, and so on. Since games require better performance than most general applications, a good gaming PC will often run office type application better than the average bear.
I just read your advice to Tom Mulet in the June 1997 (Vol. 4 No. 6) edition of PC Gamer. If he follows your advice, he will loose many of his system settings and windows customizations, since this copy operation will not copy the system registry. The same will happen if you back up to tape and then install a new hard drive. There are two good software solutions that I know of to get around this: the first is a shareware program that is free to use for a month called Ghost (http://www.ghostsoft.com). The second is Partition Magic 3.0 from PowerQuest.
Benjamin Henry, via the Internet

Although we use powerful gaming PCs here, it's doesn't fly as an excuse to avoid doing actual work; a machine that runs games really well will run *Microsoft Word* even better.

Glossary

bus master
This is a type of system bus that allows direct communication between the bus controller and the peripherals attached to the bus (like video cards and hard drive controllers), bypassing the CPU. This greatly improves the performance of most devices, allowing for faster, smoother video and audio, especially when that audio and video is pulled directly from CD-ROM or DVD-ROM. Most PCI system boards support bus mastering.

codec (compressor/decompressor)
A software program or hardware device responsible for compressing or decompressing a particular type multimedia content. Compression schemes allow some types of data, most commonly full-motion video, to be reduced to a manageable size without losing any content. Common video codecs found in computer software include MPEG-1, MPEG-2, Video for Windows, and Quicktime.

In general, hardware decoding devices perform faster and more efficiently than software decoding programs. MPEG video especially has much higher quality when hardware decoded.

LAN (Local-Area Network)
A *network* is defined as a group of computers linked together for the purpose of sharing data or devices. A *local-area* network is a group of linked computers that are in the same location, connected without the means of telecommunications or other long-distance communication. Computers that are part of a network are often referred to as *nodes* of that network.

parity check
In serial communication: a single bit (0's or 1's) within a byte (8 bits) of data, used to verify that the data has arrived to its destination intact. The parity bit is keyed to odd or even parity checking. For example, in the case of an even parity, the number represented by the first seven bits of data in a byte is calculated by the computer sending the transmission. If the number is even, the parity bit is set to 0. If the number is odd, the parity bit is set to 1. The receiving computer will then calculate the number represented by the first seven bits and check the parity bit. If the results differ, then the computer detects a parity error and informs the user of a communication problem.

stop bit
In serial communication: a bit or bits that follow a byte of transmitted data to indicate that the byte is complete.

transport protocol
A method of transferring data across a network. A network will utilize a particular transport protocol to transfer data from one node to another. Most PC LANs use IPX, NetBIOS, or both as their transport protocol. The Internet uses a protocol called TCP/IP. While networks can employ a number of different protocols, computers must use the same protocol to interface directly with one another.

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Product Information Number 197

Two New Battlegrounds

I've had this love/hate thing with TalonSoft's Battleground series of wargames since its inception. The maps and the fine texture of the games themselves appealed to me, while the engine and the phasing system didn't. It's a mixed bag, and this continues into the newest titles, *Napoleon in Russia* and *Bull Run*.

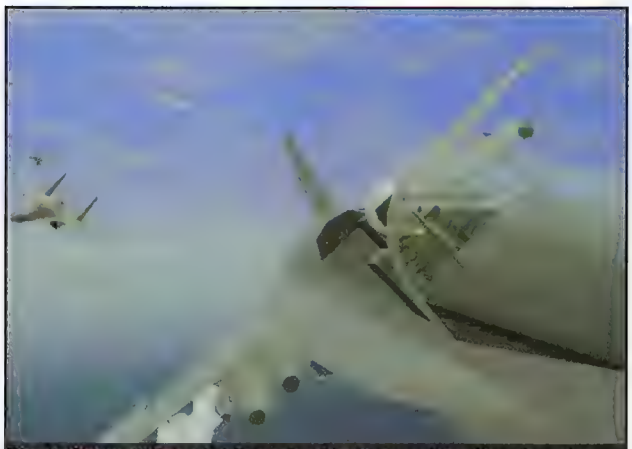
Respectively the sixth and seventh titles in the series, *Napoleon in Russia* and *Bull Run* are essentially the same as the previous games with new battles and maps, so they appear here in Extended Play. In previous reviews, my friend and colleague Bill Trotter was enthusiastic about the *Battleground* games, and I agree with many of his points. Like Bill, I'm an old board wargamer, I appreciate the loving detail in the maps, the extensive and accurate orders of battle, and the boardgame-like system of play.

But rigidly adapting a traditional hex-based system to the computer, complete with its multiple phases, isn't necessarily the best way to go. *Battleground* games have movement, defensive fire, offensive fire, cavalry charge, and melee phases. (The cavalry charge phase thankfully doesn't appear in *Bull Run*.) I'm well used to these conventions from table-top wargames, but in a computer, where the system can handle simultaneous processing of phases, it comes across as cumbersome and unnecessary. *V for Victory* and Norm Koger's games for SSI (*Tanks*, *Age of Rifles*) showed the way to adapt the complex nuances of board wargaming to the computer, but *Battleground* eschews this in favor of multiple phases.

What does this mean to the game? Rounds take longer, without necessarily giving a correlating increase in play depth. More annoying is the cumbersome and homely interface, coded as though technology hasn't advanced past Windows 3.1 in the past couple of years. Does the good outweigh the bad? For dedicated wargamers it will, especially since TalonSoft consistently refines its releases with numerous patches that tweak play. Unfortunately, the newest titles have basic installs of around 170 megabytes, and the basic install is required in order for patches to work. Small installs (30MB) result in woefully slow play.

The latest entries offer some fine moments. *Bull Run* offers both First (July 21, 1861) and Second (August 28-30, 1962) Manassas, as well as Blackburn's Ford and Brawner's Mill, for a total of 22 historical and hypothetical Civil War scenarios. *Napoleon In Russia* concerns itself with Borodino, the centerpiece battle of Napoleon's epic invasion of Russia. A large number of hypothetical plans of attack and orders of battle are included, along with the full battle and individual skirmishes, for a final count of 21 scenarios. Both feature wonderful hand-drawn maps with variable zoom modes, as well as native TCP/IP, IPX and direct connection Internet play.

Though the system is flawed, it's still enjoyable, and you aren't likely to find this kind of detailed attention to single battles anywhere else. (*Ed. note: For a hands-on look at the latest Battleground games, check out the demos on this month's CD-ROM.*)



The *Jetfighter III Extended Campaign Disc* features lots of terrain and a new plane: the F-14 Tomcat.

T. Liam McDonald

TalonSoft has released the sixth and seventh entries in its acclaimed Battleground series; they're solid games, but there's not much new here.

The Tsar's force prepares to meet the French at Borodino in *Napoleon in Russia*.

Short Takes

It's usually feast or famine here in Extended Play; at the moment, we're in feast mode. Here are some goodies that just came in:

CAPITALISM PLUS: You either love this game or are bored silly by it, but the new edition has some nice enhancements. The SVGA graphics improve the look,

Large, detailed maps are the hallmark of the Battleground games, and the tradition continues in *Bull Run*.

but some onscreen animation and more chrome would still be welcome. Real-world maps, larger maps, and a map/scenario builder are probably the biggest deal here, since they were one of the most requested features. "Random events" (stock market crashes, fire, flood, etc.), new products and industries, and new scenarios all work to make the game much more interesting. I really like the new Production Guide, which lays out all the products and their inputs in a simple manual. Owners of the original game get a $20 rebate, so the upgrade's worthwhile if you liked the original.

JETFIGHTER III ENHANCED CAMPAIGN CD: Seventy new missions and the chance to fly the F-14 Tomcat should be self-recommending for fans of the original *JF3*. The blurbs claim "5 million square miles of new scenery," and though I didn't count, I know you *can* perform free flight over large parts of Alaska, Korea, Japan, and Eastern Russia. The new missions are split between two new campaigns in Alaska and Eastern Asia. I need to spend more time on this one before I can comment on the missions themselves or the new F-14 handling.

STEEL PANTHERS CAMPAIGN DISK #2: Three new campaigns: twenty scenarios surrounding Panzer leader Hans Von Luck from 1935 to 1945, the Soviet 1st Guards from Kursk to Berlin in 17 battles, and a unit of the Japanese Army in China, the Philippines, Burma, and Malaya. Forty single scenarios, including Metz, Remagen, Finland, Guam, Manila, and many others. A super set of battles.

PCG

BUG PATCHES*

Age of Rifles v.1.4 (SSI): Bodyguard units are now disbanded between turns if they no longer have leaders assigned to them. Players of the English version may choose whether or not to have skirmishers deployed when they order a change of formation. There is no cost for changes in skirmisher deployment if it is requested in connection with a formation change. Units with mounts (horses, camels) now show up as "mounted" on the OOB editor screen regardless of actual mount status. Tactical formations may now be changed in the deployment editor regardless of the setting of the automatic formations function in the game. Exit crashes are fixed. *aor13-14.exe*

Battleground Gettysburg 1.31 (TalonSoft): Added network play, "Next Stack" hot key, Extreme Fog-Of-War Optional Rule, red-highlighting of strength value of units not at full strength. Fix for Windows 95 white hex outline problem. *bgg_131.zip*

Battleground Waterloo v.1.1 (TalonSoft): Adds Internet play. *bgw_110.zip*

Battleground Ardennes v.1.33 (TalonSoft): This update is only for the original Ardennes game, not Bulge or the Ardennes Expansion CD. *bga_133.zip*

Broken Alliance v.1.02 (HPS): Fixes numerous small errors and adds new weapons to the database. *ba_102.exe*

Casino Deluxe 2 v.1.01 (Sierra): Corrects problems with gaining more than $40,000 in chips, corrects the "Dealer's calls" in Craps, as well as problems with Video and Red Dog Poker. *cd2w95.zip*

Civilization II Scenarios Upgrade (MicroProse): In general, the scenarios were balanced for better gameplay. New icons were added to some of the scenarios, primarily to the Alexander the Great and Jihad scenarios. The loss of Union infantry production in the Civil War scenario is now fixed. Mutant guardsmen in the After the Apocalypse scenario will now appear. *civ2sc11.zip*

Destiny v.1.146 (Interactive Magic): The view window can be expanded and contracted. A "Transfer Resources" function has been added. Discoveries that you have already made are now marked. *dstpch71.zip*

Destruction Derby II Network Patch 0.91 (Psygnosis): IPX and TCP/IP play for up to 20 human racers. Serial and modem support for two human racers. Access to all Race and Derby tracks. Improved joystick, steering wheel support. Ability to customize multi-player games (laps, Computer Cars, AI attack cars). *dd2net.zip*

Dragons in the Mist v.1.01 (HPS): Fixes numerous small errors and adds new weapons. *dm-101.exe*

Enemy Nations 1.01.024 (Windward): Numerous gameplay tweaks. *e_nat013.zip*

iM1A2 Abrams Update (Interactive Magic): Dossiers will no longer freeze up if your default name is longer than 15 characters, even if your default Windows 95 name is longer. Jets and helicopters retain their line-of-sight advantages, but no longer fire missiles through hills. In multi-player versions, forts (bunkers) are now set up correctly for all players. The battle score equation has been refined slightly, making it harder to achieve a "perfect" score of 100. *abrmv110.zip*

Interstate '76 v.1.06 (Activision): Host now has the ability to eject cheaters from multi-player games. Also, minor internal optimization changes have been made. *i76v106.zip*

Lighthouse 2.0 to 2.0a (Sierra): Adds extensive online help, a cursor highlight option, several new features to make the more difficult puzzles a little easier, and a fix for errors in the submarine section. *lh20_20a.zip*

Marble Drop 1.1 (Maxis): Various bug fixes. *marb4511.zip*

NASCAR Racing 2 v.1.03 (Papyrus): Corrects the problem with the car jerking to one side, and other bugs. *nas2_02.zip*

Panthers in the Shadows v.1.21 (HPS): Fixes many small errors and adds a few weapons. *ps-121.exe*

PBA Bowling v.1.14 (beta) for Win 95 (Bethesda): Fixes a sorting problem with an average league team stats, average league not being able to play all of the games, fixes the "vs. team" on the league team stats, fixes the "MultiMedia Timer Too Slow" problem. *pba114.zip*

Shadow Warrior 1.1 shareware (3D Realms): Fixes various lock-ups and sync bugs. Also adds higher mouse sensitivity, re-words 50 play messages, and speeds up start of Level 3. *sw11swpt.zip*

Third Reich PC v.1.38 (Avalon Hill): Addresses virtually all remaining bugs. *3r_38.zip*

Tigers on the Prowl 2 v.2.05 (HPS): Fixes numerous small errors and adds a few new weapons. *top-206.exe*

Yoda Stories Patch #5 (LucasArts): Corrects problems related to various zones. *yopatch5.zip*

*YOU'LL FIND ALL OF THESE PATCHES ON *THE CD!*

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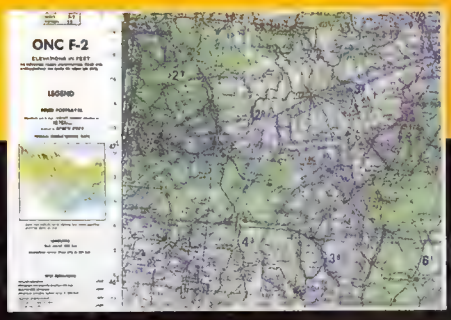
Photorealistic terrain – Magic Labs' DEMON™-1 graphics engine generates photorealistic terrain from satellite imagery and real-world elevation data for unprecedented visual realism. The game includes a Free Operation Navigational Chart of Bosnia so players can layout their flight plan before flying the mission.



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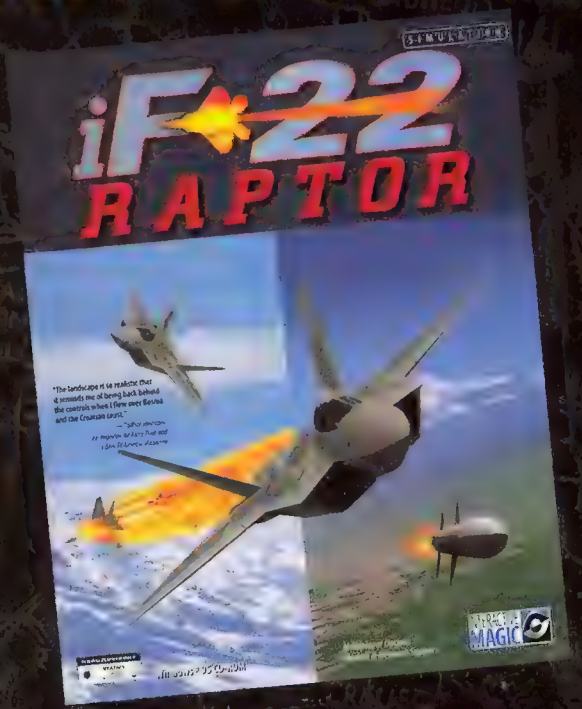

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Product Information Number 188

The Spring Slump

Spring may bring new life in the dirt-based world, but in the bit-based universe it's a barren season. Most software companies have spent their spark on winter holiday releases, and they're saving their energy for the upcoming Electronic Entertainment Expo. In Spring, I dig through the piled-up software boxes like a squirrel searching for nuts in the snow. After some earnest searching this past Spring — and a few phone calls — I was able to claw the cyber-dirt away from a trio of terrific packages. Each takes kids on a trip across space or time, inviting them to explore new worlds.

Skytrip America

Choose a zippy hover jet, a graceful hot air balloon, or a homemade sputter-clunker. Any of the three vehicles will take you where you want to go in *Skytrip America*. For the price of a CD-ROM, you can travel across the United States, across time, and across cultural boundaries in Discovery Channel Multimedia's excellent new package. Designed for people 9 years old and older, *Skytrip America* packs centuries of information into a thin, little disc; it also includes an beautifully designed interface.

Skytrip America paints a stunning landscape of the United States, peppered with familiar landmarks, well-known people, and famous events. In the Deep South, for example, there's a black-velvet painting of Elvis Presley next to Martin Luther King's march for civil rights. Click on any of these items for a short description. Click on the media viewer for encyclopedia articles accompanied by photos, audio readings, and, at times, video. Every image is sharp, bright, and beautiful; and this package is evidence that PC video is getting better, too.

Among the other information sources is a collection of narratives, often reflecting the perspective of various U.S. cultures. Irene Bedard, the voice of Pocahontas in the Disney movie, explains how Native Americans fit into the landscape; Penn Jillette, the voice of the comedy team Penn and Teller, explains how humanity and geography play off of each other. Michael Chang, Daniel Pesina, and Chris Webber discuss their ethnic groups' experiences.

Heidi E. H. Aycock

Even without these personalities, *Skytrip* has an admirable multicultural flavor.

Another software company might have stuffed all this information into the program and let you sink or swim as you explored it. But *Skytrip*'s designers built a friendly interface that simplifies finding a specific topic or wandering idly across time and space. And no matter what style of explorer you are, you won't get lost. You can fly over the landscape and click on interesting items, or you can use the index in the media player. You can fly to new regions through special corridors or you can choose them from a map. You can even find items on a timeline and click on them to get more information. A journal keeps track of where you've traveled and images you've collected along the way.

For people who just can't decide what to do next, *Skytrip America* includes a scavenger hunt game. As you explore, you deliver mail according to cryptic clues. *Skytrip America* also features a Ghost Town adventure game, but I found it slow and dull. No big loss, though; the program has plenty to offer.

For a content-based package — and anyone who has read this column more than twice knows how little I like content-based packages — *Skytrip America* is a masterpiece. Buy it for the same reason you'd buy a coffee table book on U.S. history. It's a vast collection of interesting, well-written articles, and they're packaged in an engaging and useful way.

Kids must use trial and error to move Putt-Putt from the entrance of the videogame parlor to the Squoosh game in *Putt-Putt Travels Through Time*.

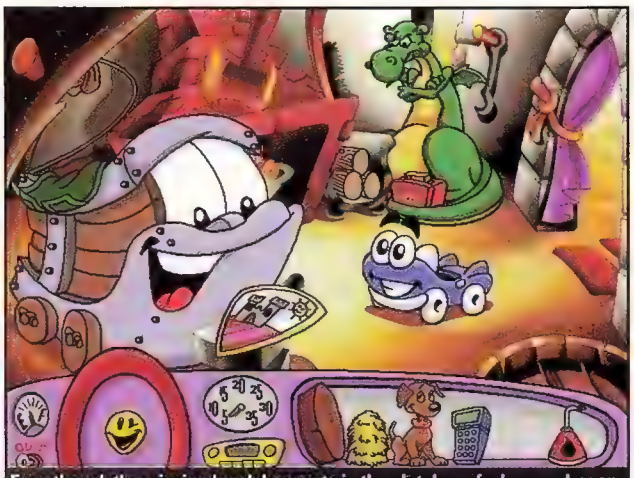
Putt-Putt Travels Through Time

Skytrip America shuttles older kids and grown ups through time and space, but where's the time-traveling vehicle for younger children? In a brightly colored Humongous Software box, of course. The latest Putt-Putt adventure fashions a lively little excursion through past, present, and future.

In *Putt-Putt Travels Through Time*, the upbeat little car heads for Mr. Firebird's shop to show off his history report, his calculator, and his lunch box. During a demonstration of Mr. Firebird's Time Machine, Putt-Putt's prized possessions are sucked into a time vortex and scattered in the past and future. To close the vortex, Putt-Putt dives in to search for the missing items and his dog Pep.

Like other Putt-Putt adventures, the key to the game is collecting items that will come in handy somewhere else. For example, in the Medieval time zone, I found Putt-Putt's Fire Engine Lunch Box in the scaly clutches of a fire-breathing dragon. To recover the lunch box, I had to find food for the cantankerous monster. In another time zone, I found a machine that formulates food

Spring and Summer always bring a lull in the flow of new software releases, but it's still possible to find some winners if you know where to look.



Even though the missing lunch box rests in the clutches of a hungry dragon, Putt-Putt's spirits stay high as he searches for dragon food.

for various animals, including — what else — dragons. There are plenty of other puzzles to be solved in a similar manner.

Along with the puzzles, there are lots of incidental animations to be uncovered — dancing flowers, skittering mice, and so on — and there are some very entertaining games. My six-year-old's favorite was the three-dimensional Pong game in the futuristic videogame parlor.

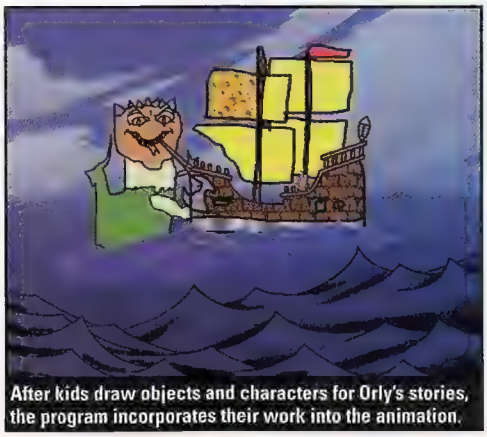
So what's so educational about a game like *Putt-Putt*? Kids learn to solve problems, to wait for more information, to try new ideas. There's lots of higher-order thinking going on in *Putt-Putt*. There are also games that exercise spatial relationship skills as well as memory. Beyond the cerebral lessons, kids learn that an optimistic, respectful attitude goes far. Putt-Putt's amiable nature — in the face of some obstinate characters — earns him victory in the end.

Best of all, when Putt-Putt returns home with his calculator, his dog, and his other treasures, Mr. Firebird apologizes for all the trouble Putt-Putt encountered. Putt-Putt, in his own sunny style, tells Mr. Firebird that the adventure wasn't any trouble at all. He makes the best of things, and we can all learn from that example.

Orly's Draw-A-Story

Little Orlando and her buddy Lancelot the frog also set an excellent example, as does Broderbund with its latest creativity package, *Orly's Draw-A-Story*.

When I heard about the program, I thought it sounded too limited, too canned to be a good creativity package. The folks at Broderbund said Orly tells stories and asks children to illustrate them at several points in the tales. *Jeez*, I thought, *now we're telling kids what to draw*. But, like all Broderbund packages, the boundaries of the program merely make it more manageable and more engaging. Not only that, but the program includes plenty of opportunities for kids to doodle and to write their own stories with their own illustrations. Nobody's creativity is being squashed by *Orly's Draw-A-Story*.



After kids draw objects and characters for Orly's stories, the program incorporates their work into the animation.

Orly's character has been expertly built, from her high cheekbones and expressive mouth to her friendly demeanor. She speaks with a Jamaican accent, interjecting *mon* just often enough to sound genuine, but not often enough to become annoying. She seems to like herself and everyone around her, but she's no wimp.

Her stories arise from the normal events in her life: a day at the beach, an afternoon hanging out in the junkyard, and so on. By the end of each tale, though, extraordinary things have happened. In "Lancelot: Bug Eater," for example, a tiny bug sails the sea, paints masterpieces, and saves the universe. Throughout the narratives, Orly pauses to let kids draw parts of the story. They draw Vasco De La Bugga's sailing ship and the sea monster that harasses them. They draw Romeo Bug's castle and a great artist-bug's masterpiece. They can start from scratch with just the few features that Orly provides — the sea monster's face, the castle's drawbridge, the masterpiece's frame — or they can import canned drawings to color and alter as they please. As Orly continues to weave her tale, these drawings are smoothly incorporated into the animated scenes.

The art tools lend as much charm to *Orly's Draw-A-Story* as the protagonist does. Although kids are still limited to a clumsy mouse-driven pencil tool, they are treated to a forgiving paintbrush tool. Once they click inside a shape that has been defined by the pencil, they can drag the mouse with reckless abandon. The color or pattern loaded into the brush will stay within the lines of the shape. It's still hard to draw a straight triangle, but it's easy to color it in neatly. The patterns are beautiful designs that add dimension and realism to pictures. They include a pattern for filling a sky with billowing clouds and a pattern for filling in a building with bricks. There are grassy patterns, metal patterns, and indescribable patterns.

The art tools are organized into an inviting interface that talks back to the artist. The New and Undo buttons are heads that comment on the picture and chat with Orly. Even the subjects of the pictures interact with kids. The sea monster threatens to eat everyone in sight, and the bugs on the sailing ship fall off the deck when kids click on them.

With its interface, its tools, and its presentation, *Orly's Draw-A-Story* joins the ranks of many other Broderbund products as a program that sucks kids into technology in creative and encouraging ways.

My children are completely absorbed, and I'm completely happy with what they're absorbed in. What a deal. PCG

Orly, a spunky kid from Jamaica, chats with young artists as well as other characters around the doodle pad in *Orly's Draw-A-Story*.

Massively Multi-player

Lately, the term "massively multi-player" is being used more and more in the world of online gaming. It is basically understood to describe a game that lets dozens, if not hundreds, of gamers to play at once, as opposed to the typical game of *Command &Conquer* (four players max), *Red Alert* (limited to eight), or *Quake* (up to 16). Even *QuakeWorld*, with 32 players, probably doesn't qualify, since some massively multi-player games are promising to support *thousands* of players at once. Certainly everyone won't be in the same room at once, but that's still a lot of people online with a large amount of simultaneous interaction.

Currently, the most popular multi-player games (like the ones mentioned above) merely simulate local-area network games over the Internet. With only a few exceptions (mainly *Quake*, which is constantly evolving), Internet play does not extend the life of a game all that much — the *C&C* crowd has moved on to *Red Alert*, the *WarCraft II* players will move on to *StarCraft*. And I don't know how many people will be playing *Diablo* or *Interstate '76* a year from now.

Multi-player modes enhance these retail games, but not as much as might be hoped. For many people, there are only so many tank rushers, pattern-runners, and campers they will put up with before they get bored and move on to a new game. You get a smarter and more unpredictable opponent when you play another human, but one that is also more rude and prone to dropping out when they're losing — AI players at least are sporting enough to hang on until the end.

So it would be unfortunate if LAN-style multi-player games were the only kind of Internet game people were exposed to. Net gaming has the potential to open a totally new kind of experience rarely seen in computer gaming: persistent worlds. But by recreating the LAN experience on the Internet, games like *Descent* and *Red Alert* have managed to bring a critical mass of gamers to the brave new world of Internet gaming. There, players may eventually discover games that go beyond the deathmatch free-for-alls they're used to. It's this new kind of game that is more likely to keep them online in the long run: games with persistent worlds.

Jason Bates

This distinction between "multi-player" and "massively multi-player" is important, but an even more important distinction is between those games with persistent worlds and those without. Online roleplaying games are persistent worlds, meaning that if you leave a backpack stuffed with equipment somewhere in the woods, when you come back a week later, it'll still be there — assuming no one else picked up in the meantime. Obviously, a *Quake* deathmatch is not persistent, nor is a *Red Alert* battle. Besides the fact that you can't voluntarily drop your backpack in *Quake*, even if you could, it would be gone the next time the server was restarted.

Non-persistent games are like a hand of cards or a pick-up game of basketball; you jump in, play, have fun, then exit — and the end result has no long-term effect. You can tack on ladders and clans and the like, but there is nothing inside the game itself that recognizes who you, the player, are and what you have done or achieved in the past. One exception, *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*, does know your rank, but it still has you fighting the same limited set of engagements over and over.

Even some of the massively multi-player games like *Air Warrior* or *WarBirds* are not persistent; each time you log on, you start fresh. The people you shot down are long gone; in short, there is no continuity of experience. The war never ends, never progresses.

A persistent world, by contrast, has its roots in the text-based MUDs (multi-user dungeons) of the early Internet. You create a character, build alliances, friendships, wealth, and power, and the game world becomes like a second home, a virtual role-playing game. If you change the world, it stays changed. This kind of game may appeal to fewer people at first, but it should be more successful in the long run; by definition, the people who participate in those games will be far more involved and will spend much more time online.

Persistent-world games may resemble roleplaying games like *Dungeons & Dragons*, as is the case with the most anticipated of the massively multi-player, persistent world game, *Ultima Online*, but that doesn't mean persistent worlds need to be tied to worlds of sorcery and dragons. You could create a persistent-world game based on sports teams — instead of just playing a pickup game of *FPS: Football Pro* on INN (as we used to be able to do), you could take on the role of the coach of a *FPS: Football Pro* team for an entire season. That's what's done in rotisserie baseball, and it's essentially what is done in the Internet leagues of *FPS: Football Pro*. With a little bit of imagination, the persistent world model can be applied to virtually any genre — fighting games, action games, strategy games. Adventure games are probably the most difficult category to put online, since they are by their nature linear and episodic.

But whatever the genre, a persistent-world game has the same compelling character identification as a novel or a paper roleplaying game, with the added visual aid of computer graphics. Everyone wants to build an online community in the belief that this will create customers who are more loyal and spend more time online. A persistent world already has that elusive "community" aspect — the rivalry and friendship between players — built into the game itself.

Looking for that elusive "community" feeling in games — the rivalry and friendship between players? Try a persistent world, where it's already a part of the game

PCG

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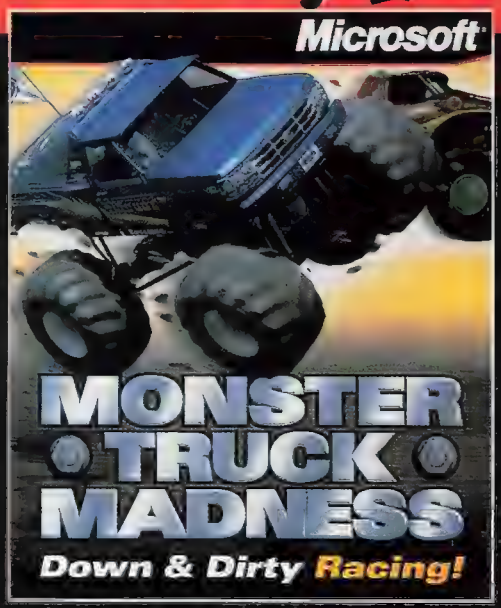

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Views from The Other Side

Game designers are a wacky bunch, and this month (with a little help from the Sharpened Stick) I've managed to get Ted Peterson, the chief designer of *Daggerfall*, to share what computer game design is *really* all about. Treat him nicely — he's been through a lot.

The Designer Speaks

Game designers are a strange people with heads like pigs, feet like kangaroos, and eyes in the front and back of their heads. This peculiar species speaks many languages but prefers not to talk to others of its kind. Designers talk to programmers, haltingly, in the tongue of gamers. And to gamers, even more haltingly, in the tongue of programmers. Thus, nobody understands designers, and many assume that they must be very intelligent indeed to make so little sense. Most designers agree.

It's harder to say what a game designer really does for a living. It's an amorphous title, which lends a little to its glamour. Usually, gameplay, story line, and interface are the holy trinity of the designer's job. Some designers are supposed to be the Keepers of the Flame, the ones who come up with the Big Idea of the game and make sure the producers, artists, programmers, composers, marketing people, and others stay true to that vision. Then again, some designers are more prosaic tool-users, who slap together levels or missions. In some companies, directors, producers, art directors, chief programmers, and various executive types may assume some of the Keeper of the Flame responsibilities. As the industry saying goes: "Programmers Program, Artists do Art, but Everyone thinks they're a Designer."

Those who would like to make games, but can't program or create art, are often interested in becoming a designer. It's hard to give advice for someone who wants to embark on such a pathless walk through the wilderness. No two designers that I know have gotten their jobs the same way. What usually happens is that someone gets hired into a game company in some other role — as a producer, programmer, game tester, executive assistant — and then conspires to get one of the existing designers fired, or even killed, to take the position.

The way I did it was by being hired on as a writer. I was living in Washington, D.C. at the time, and I answered an ad in the *Washington Post* that said something like "Writer Wanted: Must Have Published Science-Fiction or Fantasy Work. P.O. Box Blah Blah Blah." My cover letter read: "Dear P.O., I don't know what kind of a company you are, and I frankly don't think that writing science-fiction and fantasy stories is going to get me rich. However, against all reason, I've decided to send you my resume and a sample of my writing. The only thing I should add is that I'm a recent college graduate, perfectly normal in every way, except when there's a full moon, I grow a third eye and butterfly wings. Yours truly, Ted Peterson." The company, Bethesda Softworks, called me back the next day, because this industry likes weirdos.

If the designer is fortuitous enough to lack interest in doing anything original, he or she is home free once the job has been secured. Still, it is the perversion of those so blessed that even they may, on occasion, want to make something risky and need to get money from the non-gamers who own most game companies. A computer roleplaying game (RPG) is one such risky venture. There are whole countries that run on lower budgets than it cost to make *Wing IV* or *Phantasmagoria*. How are you gonna convince someone that what we need is another computer roleplaying game?

No, it won't do as well as *Myst*. Yes, it'll take a lot of people a long time to put it together. Yes, roleplaying also describes what you do when you dress in your wife's clothing, but that's not what we're talking about right now.

If you've gone through this process, you must have some idea of what new slant you want to give to RPGs: an original theme, greater freedom of character movement, more interactivity of environment, whatever. Keeping that in mind, you begin to craft your Concept Summary. That's about a page long — about the attention span of the average executive officer. If it's approved, it's expanded to about 40 pages with more detail and called a Concept Document. Finally, over the course of some months, it becomes a 500-page Design Document. Sound like a lot of work? There *are* shortcuts.

As cute as some of us may be, there is a teeny-tiny streak of laziness in us designers. It comes down to this: fantasy RPGs are easier to design for the computer than non-fantasy RPGs. Details make the game, and in a fantasy game you can decide which details to put in and leave out, according to the world you design. If you invent a primitive or medieval world, you don't have to try to include all the realities of modern or future life that complicate gameplay and bog down the action. To design a good science-fiction RPG, you're going to have to do all the design of a *MechWarrior 2* or a *TIE Fighter*, plus the roleplaying elements: skills tables, class differences, advancement formulas, guilds, quests, NPC interaction, yadda, yadda, yadda. Why not just make a *MechWarrior 2* or *TIE Fighter* clone and get home a little earlier for dinner?

Finally, I think it's ultimately the magic of a fantasy setting that keeps it the favored roleplaying arena. I don't mean to say that sorcery is much more compelling than, say, lasers. It's just that the concept of "magic" may be used to explain some undocumented features and game peculiarities. ("Why did my computer just reboot? Must be some kind of gypsy curse. Let's take a look at the manual.") PCG

Michael Wolf

Mike steps aside this month, giving the designer of *Daggerfall* a chance to answer a burning question: Why create a roleplaying game?

Are We Running Out of Battles?

William R. Trotter

No sooner had the word gotten out that Microsoft's *Close Combat 2* would depict the Arnhem campaign, than the following complaint appeared in the strategy game forums online: "It's sad to see that *CC2* is about Operation Market-Garden. It makes me wonder if producers of strategy games lack imagination or just think that we need another version of this pointless battle...or of the Battle of the Bulge...."

As to the Bulge, I couldn't agree more. While the battle itself certainly was not "pointless," another simulation of it surely is. I mean, come on, the Germans will *always* lose (unless you set up grossly, egregiously phony starting conditions).

Market-Garden is another matter, however. It was the boldest, riskiest Allied plan of the entire European campaign, and if the operations had been led with comparable boldness and commitment by the Allied high command, Germany might well have been knocked out of the war before Christmas, 1944. It was an intense, see-saw campaign, one that was often balanced on a knife-edge, and thus it makes for a very satisfying and replayable wargame.

But the poster's message does raise a question: Are the financial stakes now so high that big wargame companies can't afford to model lesser-known campaigns, for fear that the subjects may be too esoteric to attract the kind of audience that can justify the cost of development?

The success of *Age of Rifles* argues against this; sure, it didn't generate the numbers that *Panzer General* did, but it turned a respectable profit. Ditto for the *Steel Panthers* add-on campaigns. If the only widely available 20th Century wargames comprise nothing but "World War Two's Greatest Hits," a deplorable narrowing of focus could become a self-fulfilling prophecy. I contend that consumers who become interested in wargaming are intelligent enough, and well-read enough, to seek out good simulations — even if the campaigns in question are not as famous as The Bulge or even Stalingrad.

After some rumination, then, I'd like to suggest the following topics as being worthy of full-scale games:

Age of Rifles proved a wargame doesn't have to feature WWII's Greatest Hits.

• THE PHILIPPINES CAMPAIGN OF 1940-41 (WORKING TITLE: "THE BATTLING BASTARDS OF BATAAN"): If MacArthur hadn't been so arrogantly complacent as to allow his entire air force to be destroyed in the opening hours of the war, nor so sluggish about stockpiling material and ammo on the Bataan Peninsula, the Japanese might well have been stopped cold. The basic American/Filipino plan was sound — only its implementation was poor. Given the option of doing what MacArthur *should* have done, the player could enjoy a heroic, backs-to-the-wall epic.

• ANZIO AND BEYOND: This Allied attempt to make an end-run around the formidable German defenses of the Gustav Line and thereby liberate Rome before the Germans had a chance to recover from their surprise, was brilliantly conceived. Alas, the American commander, General John Lucas, proved to be as timid as the Civil War's George McClellan; he insisted on a massive buildup of armor on the beach before striking inland. Surprise was lost; the Germans rallied with their customary verve, and Winston Churchill was forced to admit: "I had hoped we would be hurling a wildcat ashore, but all we got was a stranded whale." Anzio presents wargamers with every bit as much drama as the Normandy campaign and even more historical might-have-beens.

• THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR: A legendary struggle of Good vs. Evil. Latest research into Soviet archives indicates that Stalin gave the Republicans far more arms than was realized at the time, so the odds were not as daunting as historians have thought — at least not on the battlefield. The challenge for the player lies in imposing a unified political/military will on the ideological anarchy that crippled the Republicans from the start. Done properly, this could be an outstanding blend of politics and strategy, and my guess is that there are enough would-be Hemingways out there to make such a game commercially viable.

So much for my two cents' worth. Readers' comments are invited.

PCG

In today's hit-driven market, are wargame developers focusing too much on the same-old same-old? Must we re-fight the same handful of battles again and again?

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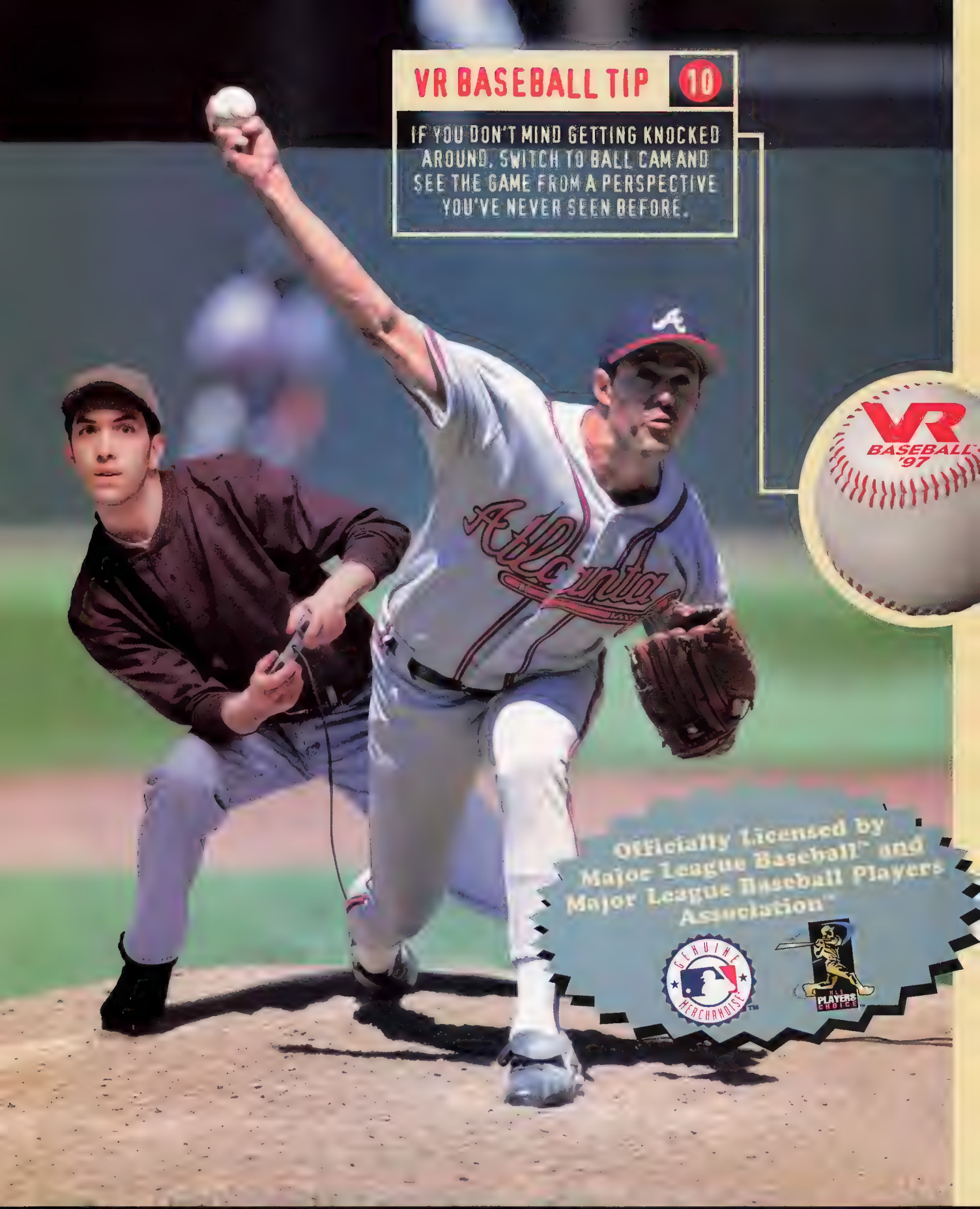
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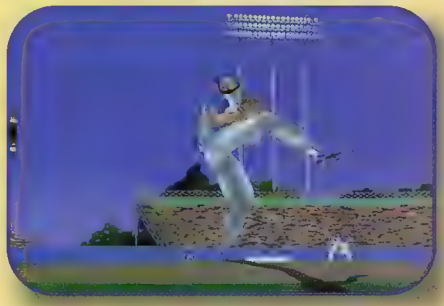

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Raptor Riot

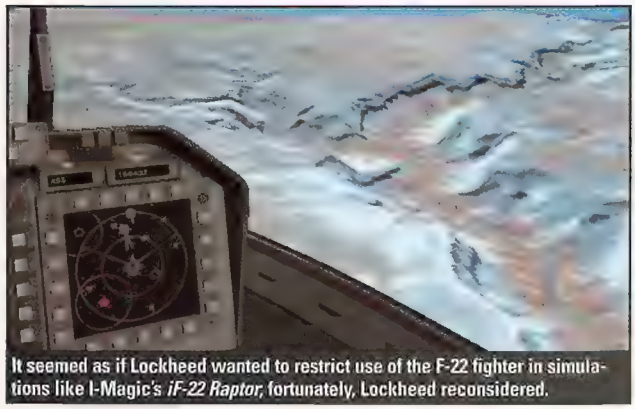
You've probably already heard something about the big F-22 controversy that started a couple of months ago. (If not, you can always flip to this month's Eyewitness section and read all about it. I'll wait here.)

Here's the gist of it: Last May, lawyers for Lockheed Martin, the company that designed the F-22, sent a "cease and desist" letter to Interactive Magic, makers of the *iF-22 Raptor* simulation. In part, the letter said:

We are writing on behalf of our client, Lockheed Martin Corporation ("Lockheed Martin") to advise you that "F-22" and "F-22 Raptor" are trademarks of Lockheed Martin, who is in final license agreement discussions with NovaLogic, Inc. for exclusive use of the "F-22" marks for interactive computer flight simulation games. Interactive Magic's use of the trade name "iF-22 Raptor" in its flight simulation game, in conjunction with images and photographs of Lockheed Martin aircraft, directly infringes Lockheed Martin's rights in violation of federal and state statutes and the common law. Accordingly, Lockheed Martin must now request that Interactive Magic immediately adopt a different, non-infringing trade name for its computer games and remove all references to Lockheed Martin and all images of Lockheed Martin aircraft from any and all software Interactive Magic manufactures, sells, and/or distributes.

NovaLogic says it sent a separate letter to I-Magic, simply asking I-Magic not to call its F-22 sim *iF-22Raptor*. NovaLogic says I-Magic's title infringes on the trademarked *F-22 Raptor*, the name of NovaLogic's own upcoming F-22 sim.

So there were two separate issues: NovaLogic's statement that I-Magic's title for its F-22 sim is a trademark infringement, and Lockheed's apparent desire to begin licensing the exclusive rights to use the aircraft it builds.



It seemed as if Lockheed wanted to restrict use of the F-22 fighter in simulations like I-Magic's *iF-22 Raptor*, fortunately, Lockheed reconsidered.

The issue of game titles is perfectly understandable; if NovaLogic has registered the name *F-22 Raptor* for its sim, then I-Magic's *iF-22 Raptor* may well have been an infringement. Even if it was *technically* legal, it was a little too close for comfort. As NovaLogic says, it's a bit like someone marketing a new soft drink under the name "iCoca Cola" — that little "i" at the beginning doesn't make the name sufficiently different. And there's evidence that the similarity of the two titles has already caused confusion among gamers; NovaLogic's sim has already been referred to as "iF-22" more than once in Internet flight-sim forums.

Ultimately, Interactive Magic announced it would drop the "Raptor" from the title of its F-22 game. It's troublesome for I-Magic, since they've already advertised their F-22 sim as *iF-22 Raptor* — and at this late stage, they may have printed God-knows-how-many manuals and game boxes bearing that title. A last-minute title change could potentially cost oodles of money, but a trademark is a trademark, and it was NovaLogic's right to try and head off what it saw as an infringement.

Unfortunately, the letter from Lockheed to I-Magic raised a much more complex issue, and one that could still have ominous repercussions for the simulation genre as a whole. Specifically, it's that bit about removing "all references to Lockheed Martin and all images of Lockheed Martin aircraft from any and all software" that scares the

Dan Bennett

A stink arose from the legendary Skunk Works when Lockheed Martin sent a letter that looked like a grim omen for the whole PC simulation industry.

Lockheed's move would've threatened DID's *TFX3* as well as the I-Magic game — not to mention the precedent it would've set for the whole sim industry.

hell out of flight-sim fanatics.

What it boiled down to was an unprecedented attempt by a civilian contractor to restrict the depiction of military hardware in computer simulations. This isn't just about conflicting game titles anymore. It seems clear that if Lockheed Martin had gotten what it wanted, game developers wouldn't have been able to use the F-22 or any other Lockheed aircraft — or even *mention* Lockheed — without first buying the rights from Lockheed.

Sure, companies make exclusive agreements with game developers all the time — we don't see anyone other than Interplay producing games based on the original Star Trek TV series, because Interplay has the exclusive rights to do those games. But there's a key difference here: the development and manufacture of the F-22 has been funded by taxpayers. If Lockheed Martin had created the new fighter entirely with its own money, the company would've been absolutely within its rights to sell an exclusive license to a single software company — and to sue the pants off of anyone who infringed on that license. But *we* paid for the F-22 — you and I. The F-22 belongs to us in a moral sense, if not in a legal one.

And that was the real issue: a private corporation hoped to restrict the use of a publicly funded aircraft by selling the exclusive rights to that aircraft to another private corporation. I understand that manufacturers of military hardware have to be creative in finding new sources of income as military spending diminishes, but it would've been wrong for Lockheed to do that by selling the exclusive rights to the F-22. It'd be like the construction company that built your local Public Library deciding to charge you for admission to the building.

NovaLogic took a different tack than I-Magic and DID, choosing to negotiate with Lockheed for an F-22 exclusive.

That's how the vast majority of gamers see it, anyway. And even the U.S. Air Force agrees; a spokesman quoted in the *Raleigh News and Observer* said in early June that the name "F-22 Raptor" and images of the plane belong in the public domain.

Still, all of these reasonable arguments would've meant nothing if Lockheed had decided a lucrative license was more important than public opinion. Fortunately, clearer heads prevailed; just as this column was going to press, Lockheed announced that it wouldn't license the F-22 without first consulting the Air Force, and added that any licenses granted will be non-exclusive. In flight sim circles, we have a very technical term for such an announcement: we call it A Good Thing.

But what if Lockheed had gone the other way and succeeded in restricting the use of their aircraft to exclusive licensees? It would've set an ugly precedent. Not only might we end up with just one F-22 sim to choose from — probably NovaLogic's, since they apparently had a jump on the licensing process — we could also have seen such limitations applied to other Lockheed aircraft. Since the Lockheed stable includes World War Two's B-24 Liberator and today's F-111 and F-16 Fighting Falcon, the licensing issue could've affected all kinds of simulations. Even simulations of the upcoming Joint Strike Fighter could've been threatened; late last year, Lockheed won one of two JSF concept demonstration contracts from the Department of Defense, which means they're in the running to build the real thing. (Last time this happened, it was Lockheed vs. Northrop and McDonnell Douglas for the Advanced Tactical Fighter, and Lockheed's F-22 came out on top.)

Lockheed may have weakened its claim on the F-22 by not taking legal action when earlier sims like *Jetfighter III* featured the high-tech fighter.

And now that the issue's been raised, it's possible other major military contractors will decide Lockheed Martin's had a good idea. It's not completely far-fetched to imagine a future in which only one software developer is allowed to create a simulation based on any given piece of military hardware. Picture having just one M1A2 Abrams tank simulation to choose from, instead of I-Magic's *iM1A2 Abrams*, NovaLogic's *Armored Fist 2*, and DID's as-yet-unnamed tank sim. Or maybe an AH-64D Longbow helicopter simulation that has to ship without the actual Longbow radar, when the game company's agreement with McDonnell Douglas turns out not to cover Lockheed Martin's fire control system.

But Lockheed's reversal shows the situation is far from hopeless. And if it becomes clear to the rest of the industry that most gamers believe it's wrong for any one game company to have exclusive use of publicly funded military hardware, then military contractors will find themselves with no one to buy the exclusive licenses they're peddling — and the sim genre will remain completely open to anyone who cares to tackle it. Which is the way it should be.

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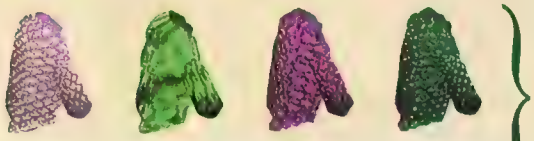

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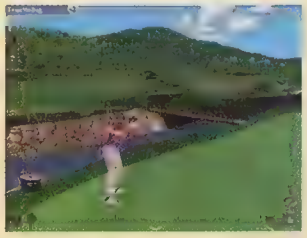

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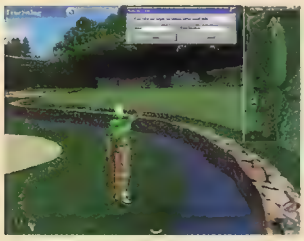

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Product Information Number 319

STRATEGY CENTRAL

SOLUTIONS • TECHNIQUES • QUICK TIPS

We've got a bunch of goodies for you this month, with *PC Gamer* expert tips on *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*, inside strategy direct from the developers for *The Last Express*, and hints for *Magic: The Gathering* and *Shadows Over Riva*. Oh, and did we mention the plethora of cheat codes? Good.

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X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter

Stay on target with these expert tips.

LucasArts' impressive multi-play space combat sim is bagging its fair share of casualties out there on the Internet, so here are some tips from *PC Gamer*'s crack pilots on how to stay alive.

Gary Whitta
"Wedgie"

Unlike the rest of the *PC Gamer* team, who took the quick and easy path and defected to the Dark Side a long time ago, I always choose to fly for the Rebel Alliance when I can. The Empire may have slightly cooler ships, but I've never felt all that comfortable in the bad guys' shoes. And besides, the Alliance has one major ace in the hole — the A-Wing. Not only is it zippier than a zip factory and can turn on a dime, it's a frustratingly small target to hit. This makes little difference for missile defense — enemy targeting computers lock on with just as much ease — but in a close-range knife fight, laser to laser, the speed, maneuvrability, and size of the A-Wing makes it in infernally tough target — just try flying against one and see. In Furball and Tournament games, the A-Wing is hard to beat, but for Combat Engagements its versatility is diminished — it's best used for high-speed fighter cover, intercepting enemy ships before they can get to mission-critical craft. Use the A-Wing's speed advantage at all times — always remember to throttle back up to 100 percent after an engagement in which you've slowed to match speed with a target.

By constantly adjusting your speed and power settings, you'll be able to out run and out fly any ship in the fleet.

A few general pointers to help maximize your enjoyment of the Combat Engagements — never go in with less than the required number of players (if the briefing says you need four players, you *need* four players), and switch off craft selection and locate player. This stops players from doing two things that, while infuriating, most people just can't resist, given the chance — change their ship from the mission spec to something more to their liking (but probably detrimental to the mission as a whole), and gang up on favorite adversaries by constantly auto-targeting the nearest human opponent. Take these toys away from them, and they'll have no choice but to actually get on with the mission. Don't forget, it only takes one player to screw up a combat engagement and so hurt everybody's career with reprimands and minus points.

Get in plenty of practice with precision stick movements for tracking targets at long range — it can seem like an eternity for that lock light to turn from yellow to red. If you're like me, missiles will account for most of your kills, and unless you're targeting an unshielded TIE Fighter, always link your missiles and fire two at a time — a single missile will rarely kill a healthy, shielded craft, and by the time you've got another lock for the second shot, his shields will most likely be back up. Don't be afraid to fire those missiles, even when supplies are short — chances are you'll be killed at least twice during a tough mission, and your new ship comes with a whole new set of warheads. If you're in serious trouble (no shields, showing an eject light) play the percentages and fire off whatever missiles you have, even if it's only a partial lock. It's better than those missiles being wasted, and all you've got to lose is a few measly points off your missile hit percentages.

Dan Bennett
"Lord Slappy"

A dead pilot isn't going to win at *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*, no matter how good his gunnery skills are. One of the keys to not becoming a dead pilot is the ability to evade or destroy enemy missiles, rockets, and torpedoes. Laser fire isn't much fun, either, but it's the missiles that get you, nine times out of ten.

If they're available, choose the decoy as your beam weapon and chaff as your countermeasures, but don't overuse them. It's possible to set your beam weapon's recharge rate high

enough that you could leave the decoy on all the time — but that's overkill, and you'd be better off directing that energy to your lasers or shields. When you hear the missile warning, turn your decoy beam on and kick out a few packets of chaff; the missile should lose its track on you pretty quickly, letting you turn off the decoy beam and get back to your mission. Be sure to change course a bit, or the missile might still sail blindly up your tailpipe.

If you're in a fighter that can't carry countermeasures or beam weapons — or if you're out of chaff and energy for your decoy — you're stuck with the last resort: turning toward the incoming missile and destroying it before it can hit you. Unless the missile is approaching you from the front, you'll want to cut your throttle to 1/3 to tighten your turning radius and minimize your closure rate with the missile. Make sure you've selected your lasers — single-fire mode usually works best — then get the missile in your sights and blast away. Then throttle back up as soon as possible.

Obviously, you've got to get the enemy in front of you before you can kill him; if you just can't shake a fighter off your tail, you'll need to throttle down to 2/3 or even 1/3 power. But don't stay at that setting for long, or you'll be a sitting duck. Throttle down just long enough to get a tighter turning radius; as the enemy fighter starts to swing into your forward sensors, throttle back up.

Remember that the combat sequences in the Star Wars movies were modeled on World War Two movies, and *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* is no different. As in any good WWII combat sim, you're not likely to survive a head-on shoot-out. Running straight for an enemy fighter that's running straight for you is the quickest path to destruction. So do what WWII fighter pilots learned to do; use the "early turn." That means approaching the enemy from a slight angle, then beginning to turn in toward him just before he whizzes past you. Again, you might want to throttle down for the turn, but speed up again as soon as you start to come out of the turn.

In the all-out multi-player furballs, don't forget the bonus points you can earn by attacking the target at the center of the battle area (usually a Nav Buoy).

Don't fire indiscriminately — off-target shots all help to decrease your laser fire percentages.

Don't hang around to watch the pretty explosions — you need to target another ship fast, and chances are there's already one on your tail anyway.

In deathmatches where the opponents are evenly matched and you're trading kill for kill, those bonus points can really mean the difference between winning and losing.

Joel Durham
"Bull Solo"

If you have the opportunity to select your craft, choose a TIE Advanced or an A-Wing, for obvious reasons. Both are more maneuverable than the rest of the crop. Stock up on advanced missiles for combat against fighters, or advanced torpedoes for an attack on a cruiser. For countermeasures, I have found a well-timed burst of chaff more effective than flares, but I seem to be in the minority on that.

If you're lucky enough to get a beam weapon, ignore the jammer and grab a decoy. Every time someone locks a missile on you, fire up your beam for a few seconds key and forget about it! The only other option is a tractor beam, which I select if I know I'm going up against squads of extremely fast and maneuverable vessels like A-Wings. A tractor beam can paralyze an opponent long enough for you to turn his ship to scrap.

In the cockpit, the first thing to do is increase power for all of your systems. Don't worry about the speed reduction; in most cases, when you've got an enemy ship in your sights, you'll be reducing your speed to keep it from getting behind you.

As far as laser configuration goes, it should depend on the range to your target. If your enemy is far away, set your lasers on single fire so you can squeeze off shots faster, with a greater chance of scoring hits. As you close and the enemy gets easier to line up, link your lasers for more raw power per hit. In cases where you have four laser cannons with options for single, dual and linked fire, think of them as being for long, medium and short range to target.

Going up against a capital ship is tough. They are usually equipped with missiles, and their lasers are extremely powerful. If you trust your escort fighters to watch your six, set your shields full forward. Often, you can get a torpedo lock before you're in range of the capital ship's weapons. If you find that to be the case, stop your ship completely and unload, unless too many unchecked enemy fighters make that impossible. Just try to empty your torpedo bays without becoming a target for the cruiser. If provisions are made to reload your torps, go do it and repeat the process. Otherwise, if you have to get close, go in at full throttle and zigzag constantly. Link your lasers and hope the force is with you!

Todd Vaughn
"Sir Hoser"

While the dogfighting tactics offered by my coworkers can be worth their weight in gold in both melees and campaign missions, the most important (and hardest) skill to learn in *XvT* is how to be a team player.

My advice is to develop good team oriented skills that can be applied to any

A TIE Interceptor is a good match for the A-Wing's speed and agility, but without shielding, it needs to keep constantly on the move.

situation. The first is pre-flight communication. Since you'll need to utilize your wingmen (human and computer controlled) to their fullest extent, be sure that each flight group understands their objectives clearly and agree on combat tactics that will maximize each pilot's potential. After carefully reviewing the mission briefing, use the team chat feature to discuss each player's role in the mission so each player knows *exactly* what they're doing. Once everybody has agreed on a battle plan, the next step is to develop a target selection protocol for each flight group so computer and human controlled pilots can do the most damage without wasting precious time and resources during a fight. For example, if you're part of a strike group ordered to take out a group of TIE bombers or Y-Wings, order your computer wingman to target the first fighter in the group then target the second for yourself. Other human pilots in your flight group should order their wingman to take out the third bomber in the enemy group and target the fourth for themselves. While it's difficult to use the in-flight chat during heavy dogfights, this simple tactic goes a long way towards eliminating confusion and wasted effort during massive dogfights. Another key piece of advice is to be flexible. While the mission may not unfold exactly as detailed in the preliminary briefing, good communication between pilots can turn certain disaster into a stunning victory.

Michael Wolf
"Phoenix"

When taking to the stars, remember the most important rule: it doesn't matter what ship you fly, it's the skill of the pilot that keeps you alive. Without skill, even the most decked-out TIE Advanced won't stand a chance against a sluggish Z-95 Headhunter. So never demean yourself by complaining you lost because you didn't have a better ship.

Now that the moral lesson is over, on with the true strategy: My tricks for keeping yourself alive rely not only on the usual combinations of speed, power, and weaponry, but also on battle awareness. It's difficult to know exactly where things are, and what's going on around you, but you *must* know if you want to survive. Make use of the map — if need be, use the Shift-M command, so the computer takes over flight of your current craft. By consulting the map, you might just discover if you're several kilometers away from your wingmen, and surrounded by the enemy. If so, you better haul butt back to the nearest friendly capital ship, and let it take out your pursuers.

Remember that while you're targeting an enemy, it will rarely target you. So if you see those tell-tale lights flash that tell you someone's got you in their sights, you'd better press that E key and make sure that acquisition doesn't become a lock.

If you check the map and discover you're the Imperial in this mess, you'd better get out of there, quick!

The best tip of all, though, is *watch your speed!* Remember that you have your quickest turning radius at 1/3 power. Keep your fingers on the speed controls on the keyboard, and if you're going to turn, hit the [key for 1/3 speed. On straight-aways, knock it to full by hitting backspace. When you're targeting computer controlled ships, and you're on their tail, flip between hitting 1/3 speed and pressing Enter to match speeds. The computer knows how to speed up and slow down, so you'll need to match it when you can. However, humans usually fall into two categories — constant speed all the time, or huge changes in speed. If you're up against constant speed, just keep hitting Enter, with only a few taps of 1/3 to keep them in your sights. Sometimes you'll face tricky pilots who like to reduce to zero speed to make you fly past them. Keep some distance between you and the enemy, just in case a slowdown occurs. If they stop, they're a sitting duck.

Jason Bates
"Destroyer"

Using the Beam decoy weapon is usually a good tactic. Set your beam recharge to maximum, and though you will lose a considerable amount of speed, you will be invisible to radar for most of a fight. While flying an Imperial fighter, a good tactic is to use your joystick's throttle wheel to slow while turning, then speed back up when you straighten out. This will maximize both your maneuverability and your speed, which are about the only advantages you have against the Rebels.

TIE Advanced, Interceptor, and Fighter pilots must do their jobs and lend fire support to the TIE Bombers when they commence their run.

When playing other people in a large mission, we prefer to turn off player recognition. This makes sense because otherwise unscrupulous players will just target the nearest player and go after only humans since they are worth more points. Turning off player recognition forces players to play 'right'... And speaking of playing right, it's important to pay attention to your briefing and try to win the mission. You'll get far more points for winning the mission than you will for taking out extra fighters.

If you're in a TIE Fighter, try to avoid rushing headlong at the enemy. He can bump you and survive, you can't. Come in at an angle and use your agility to get behind him.

When flying a TIE Bomber, forget about dogfighting: just go after your target ships. It's up to the escorts to protect you. Minimize your laser power to increase speed and maneuverability, and link your missiles to make as brief a run as possible. Once your bombing run is finished, get out of there.

On the Rebel side, the Mag Pulse missiles are meant to be used on capital ships. Enough of these, and you will take out all of its weapon systems, making finishing it off with normal weapons a breeze. What we said about the TIE Bomber also applies to the Y-Wing: focus on your mission, and don't try to dogfight in such a slow-moving truck.

For those of you who are already tired of the missions that came with the game, there are plenty of resources already out there on the web featuring new missions, new strategies and other goodies. Both the *X-Wing vs. TIE* Oupost (*http://outpost.simplenet.com/xvt/*) and the Unofficial *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* Home Page (*http://xvt.scorched.com/*) do a good job of posting news, updates and new game files for *X v. TIE* fans everywhere. Another site worth checking out is the Unofficial *X vs. TIE* Editor Page (*http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Cavern/5512/*), where a team is working on an editor that will let you create your own missions.

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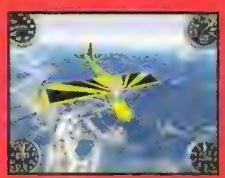

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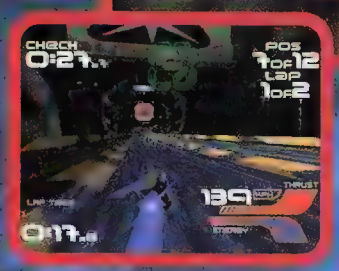

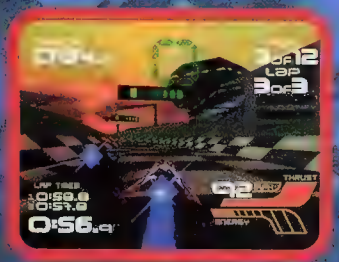

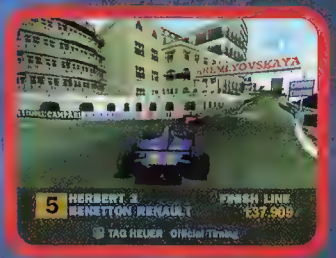

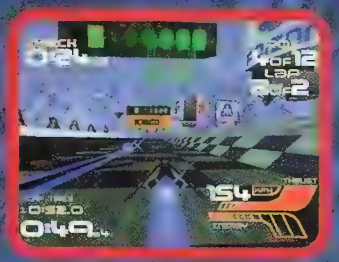

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The Last Express, Part 1

The complete solution to the first CD — straight from the developers!

So, having a hard time getting through *The Last Express*? Yeah, us too. Luckily, Jordan Mechner, the game's designer/director from Smoking Car Productions, has provided the Strategy Central crew with the following walkthrough for the first CD. It is by no means definitive (in this game, no linear walkthrough can cover all the possibilities), and other, equally valid paths will also work. So don't feel you have to stick to the script exactly; feel free to try variations of your own — that's what *The Last Express* is all about!

Friday 24 July 1914
Paris to Strasbourg

The opening sequence deposits you on the platform between train cars. Turn right and enter the Green Sleeping Car. Double-click to walk forward through the Green Car, the Red Car, and all the way up the train to the Restaurant Car. Stop in the Smoking Salon to eavesdrop if you feel like it, or just go forward into the restaurant. The head waiter will seat you at a corner table. Take a moment to read the two items in your inventory (a newspaper clipping and a telegram from Tyler). Tyler is the man you're looking for.

That's your friend Tyler, dead on the floor. Guess it's up to you to sort this mess out. First things first: hide the body!

The Murder

Don't click on anyone in the restaurant yet. Instead, go back down the train to the Green Car and ask the conductor which compartment is Tyler's. Go ahead and enter Compartment 1. That's Tyler on the floor. You need to get the body out of sight, or you will be arrested! There are several ways you can deal with this situation. Here's one: Open the couch into a bed. Click on Tyler's body to pick it up and hide it in the bed. Click on the lower edge of the bed to close it up again.

At some point (depending on how long all this takes you), the conductor will come and knock at the door. Don't let him in! If he sees the body or your bloodstained jacket, you are caught. Instead, click to speak through the door. The conductor goes away. Now you know Tyler had a dinner date in the Restaurant Car. You are going to keep this date. Click on the green jacket hanging on the wall to swap it for your bloodstained one. Now people on the train will think that you are Tyler.

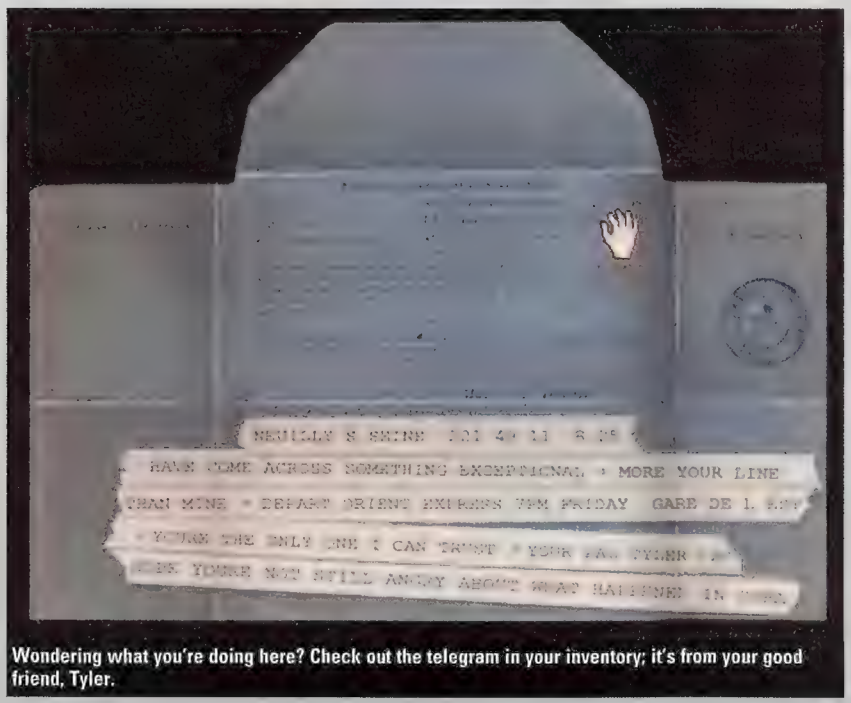
A few last things to do in your compartment: Click to close the window (it's noisy with the window open). Open the wooden crate on the small seat. Note the two indentations in the velvet indicating missing objects. Find the scarf on the floor under the seat. Take down Tyler's duffel bag from the luggage rack. Read the telegram (your response to Tyler). Take the rolled-up manuscript scroll and try to read it (It's in Russian, so you may need to get it translated by one of the passengers.).

Be sure to explore everything in Tyler's compartment, including his duffel bag. Take the telegram and scroll.

The Passengers

Go to the Restaurant Car. On the way, if you happen to run into a little kid with an annoying whistle, click on him to get a better look at the whistle. When you enter the restaurant, turn right and click on the young bearded Russian, Alexei. He leaves his book behind on the table. Take the train timetable from inside the book. Now talk to August Schmidt, the bald guy in brown. Taking you for Tyler, he starts talking about your "bargain" and wants assurance that you will keep up your end of the deal. Make a dramatic exit.

Head for the Restaurant Car and get to know your fellow passengers. They are anxious to meet you (or, rather, to meet Tyler, who you are now pretending to be).



Wondering what you're doing here? Check out the telegram in your inventory; it's from your good friend, Tyler.

August Schmidt is a shady character, and wants to talk to you about a deal he had with Tyler. Play it cool with him, and you'll be just fine.

You now have some time to kill. The most entertaining place to spend it is probably the restaurant. First to arrive is Anna, the young woman in red. You can try speaking to her, or offering her the scarf you found in Tyler's compartment, to no avail. Next is the Boutarel family. You have nothing to say to them, but their conversation is entertaining.

Eventually, August gets up and leaves — stopping on the way out to speak to Anna. Click to butt into their conversation. Be quick! You only have a limited amount of time to click. You can tell she knows you're not Tyler, and you're pretty sure she was in Tyler's compartment and is lying about it.

Alexei is waiting in the Salon. Click to offer him the Russian scroll. He refuses to help you. If you still have time to kill, try reading the newspaper on the corner seat. It is not crucial to the plot, but is full of newspaper articles about the events of July 24, 1914. Soon, the young Russian girl and her grandfather (Tatiana and Count Vassili) enter from the restaurant. Alexei stands as they walk past and addresses Vassili. They don't seem to like each other.

At about 8:45, Sophie and Rebecca (the pair of young women you saw in the Salon at the beginning of the game) emerge from Compartment E and go to dinner. You can eavesdrop on their conversation from your corner table (Like the Boutarel family, they are minor characters, but fun to listen to.).

You need to speak to Anna, and during the course of the conversation, offer her the scarf you found near Tyler's body.

The Body

Return to the sleeping cars. The conductors have started to make the beds. Uh oh! Hurry back to Compartment 1 in the Green Car. Open the window in your compartment, open the bed, and throw Tyler out the window (Okay, so you could have done this right at the beginning.). Go back out into the corridor. The conductor has a message for you: you are expected in the Private Car. Go to the Private Car at the rear of the train (If you haven't already stolen the passenger list from the magazine on the conductor's seat, this may be a good chance to do so. Just wait until the conductor is away making someone else's bed).

The Private Car

Once you have received the conductor's invitation, you can enter the Private Car and knock on the inside door. You will meet Kronos and his secretary Kahina. Kronos wants to know if you are ready to "complete the transaction" he had arranged with Tyler. Seems Tyler had a number of deals going.

The Knife Fight

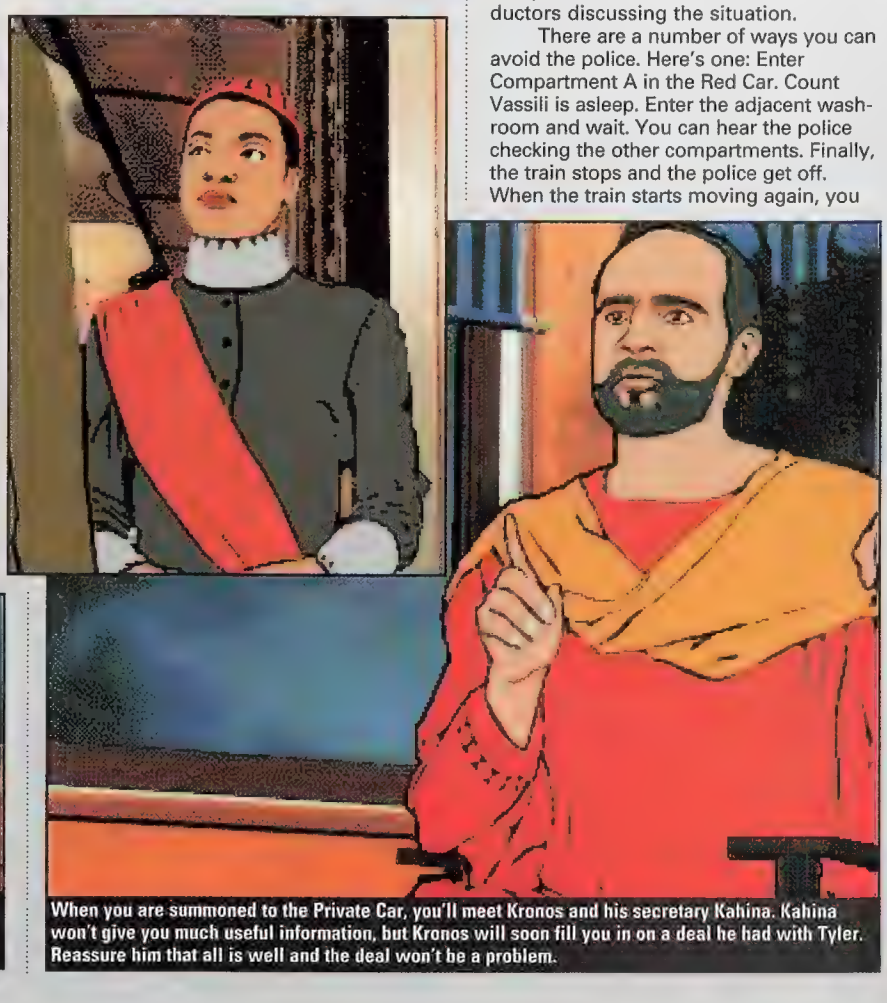
Return to your compartment. Someone is waiting for you — Milos, the leader of the Serbs. He pulls a knife on you. This will take some fast reflexes. Click to dodge Milos' knife thrusts. Eventually, he will try a left-to-right swipe (instead of lunging straight at you). This is your chance. Dodge, then grab his arm and wrest the knife away from him. Remember, you can only grab the knife after a left-to-right swipe, and you still need to dodge first! After disarming Milos, you make friends, kind of.

Milos, the leader of the Serbs, seems none too fond of you. He knows you're not Tyler, so after you disarm him, explain who you are and that you're willing to help.

The Police Search

At 9:17 the train stops in Epernay. French gendarmes board the train and start searching the compartments (This is a consequence of your having thrown Tyler's body out the window of your compartment.). You can hear the conductors discussing the situation.

There are a number of ways you can avoid the police. Here's one: Enter Compartment A in the Red Car. Count Vassili is asleep. Enter the adjacent washroom and wait. You can hear the police checking the other compartments. Finally, the train stops and the police get off. When the train starts moving again, you



When you are summoned to the Private Car, you'll meet Kronos and his secretary Kahina. Kahina won't give you much useful information, but Kronos will soon fill you in on a deal he had with Tyler. Reassure him that all is well and the deal won't be a problem.

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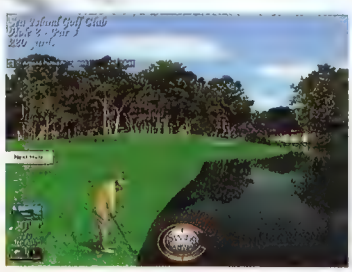

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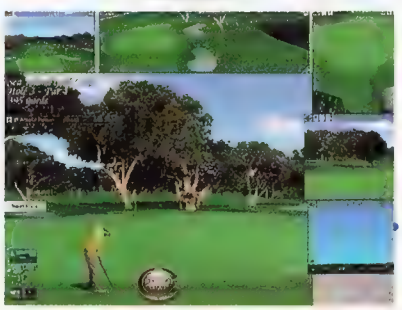

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can safely exit into the corridor. (As a variation for future replays, try waiting until after 9:05 to throw the body out the window. This creates a new problem — you have to convince the conductor not to make your bed — but at least you won't have to deal with the police search.)

Sneaking Around

Once again you have some time on your hands. You can eavesdrop on the conductor reassuring Madame Boutarel from Compartment D. Anna emerges from Compartment F and goes to the Salon to read a magazine.

You can talk to Anna once she is seated in the salon, or offer her the scarf if you haven't already. You can also eavesdrop on the second half of Sophie and Rebecca's dinner conversation — or better yet, take advantage of their absence to sneak into Compartment E and read Rebecca's diary.

The Scroll

Tatiana, the young Russian girl, goes to the rear of the train for some fresh air. When you pass between Kronos' car and the Green car (where you boarded initially), she is trying to smoke and will ask you for a light. Give her the scroll. She will promise to translate it for you.

The scroll you found in Tyler's duffel bag is in Russian, so you can ask Tatiana to translate it for you. It turns out that the scroll is a Russian fairy tale.

Jordan Mechner's Hints and Tips

• Relax! Unlike most adventure games, very few of the "mistakes" you can make in *Last Express* are fatal. You will see and hear events differently depending on what order you do things in; however, it is actually quite rare to be "in the wrong place in the wrong time" or miss a vital piece of information.

• Focus on understanding the characters — who they are and what they want — and you won't go too far wrong.

• In *Last Express*, you never need to save your game in progress. As you play, the Egg Clock automatically marks "save points" every few minutes. When you are killed or the game ends, the egg clock automatically rewinds you as far back as necessary to give you a chance to correct your mistake, and no farther. So there is no need to save a multitude of games with different file names.

• If you want to return to an earlier point in the game and try a different course of action, the Egg Clock will usually let you rewind to the desired spot or a few minutes before it. Just one caveat — after playing for a thirty-second "grace period," the rewind will become permanent, and you will no longer be able to fast forward past that point in time.

Clicking on the left button of the egg will let you rewind to certain spots in the game.

• Let the mouse cursor tell you what actions are possible. As you pass the cursor over different areas of the screen, the shape of the mouse cursor will change to indicate what will happen if you click there (turn left, pick up an item, speak, etc.). No need to waste time clicking all over the screen.

• When you get a chance, steal the passenger list from the conductor's magazine in the Green Sleeping Car. In addition to telling you which compartment is which, the list contains "memory recall" clues that change as the story develops. By clicking on a passenger's name on the list, you will hear an echo of something you heard the passenger say earlier, which may give you an idea for what to do next.

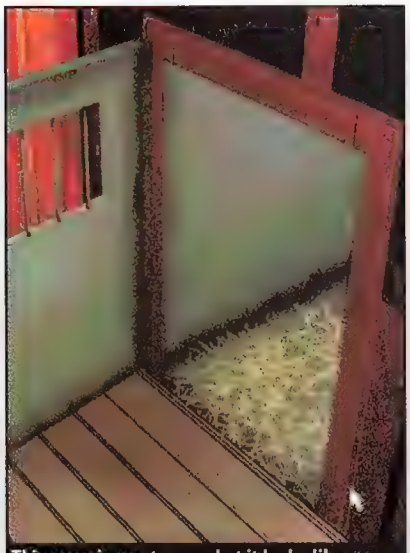
• You can also remind yourself which compartment is whose by knocking at the door. If the passenger is inside, he or she will answer; if not, the conductor will yell at you.

• To enter a compartment, wait until the conductor is not looking, or until his view is blocked by someone in the hallway. To get into locked compartments, however, you will need a key (Note: The key is available after 2:30 p.m. on the second day of the journey.).

• Although the primary skills needed to play *Last Express* are exploration, listening, and puzzle solving, the game does include several fight sequences that require fast reflexes (or luck!). These may require a bit of practice, but with persistence (or a little help from the walkthrough) you should be able to win. If you are killed in a fight, the game will restart from the beginning of the fight. You can replay as many times as necessary.

• There is also a fly-swatter puzzle on the second CD that requires fast reflexes and can be frustrating. Fortunately, this one is not necessary to win the game.

• At first you may find it difficult to orient yourself on the train. When necessary, refer to the train layout map in the manual, or the one below. Also, use the stolen passenger list to remind you which compartment belongs to which passenger.



This cage is empty now, but it looks like a place a certain dog could be kept, don't you think? Remember where this cage is — it will help you later.

More Sneaking Around

Return to the Red Sleeping Car. At 9:41 the train stops in Chalons-sur-Marne. Madame Boutarel comes out of compartment D to complain to the conductor about Miss. Wolff's dog, Max. Go to the Salon. You can listen to August and Anna getting better acquainted. Now you can go through the curtain into the kitchen corridor where the Cook is scolding the Kitchen Aide. Continue forward to the Baggage Car. Look through the glass window at the end of the corridor to see if the Trainmaster is in his office. If not, take advantage of his absence to explore the Baggage Car. Especially, note the cage at the far forward end of the car (just behind the locomotive). The cage is empty (for now) but you will be coming back here! If the Trainmaster catches you in his office, he will kick you out, no harm done, but that will put an end to your Baggage Car exploration for now.

Return to the sleeping cars. You can eavesdrop on the conductors arguing about socialism. Around ten o'clock, you can also hear Sophie and Rebecca having a little fight in Compartment E. Shortly thereafter, they go to the Salon, and Anna returns to her compartment. Slip into Compartment E to read Rebecca's journal (if you haven't already). You can also climb out the window and spy on Anna asleep in the adjacent compartment. Notice all that cool stuff sitting on the chest by the window...

That's about all you can do for now. Return to your compartment and get some sleep; you're going to need it.

The Dream

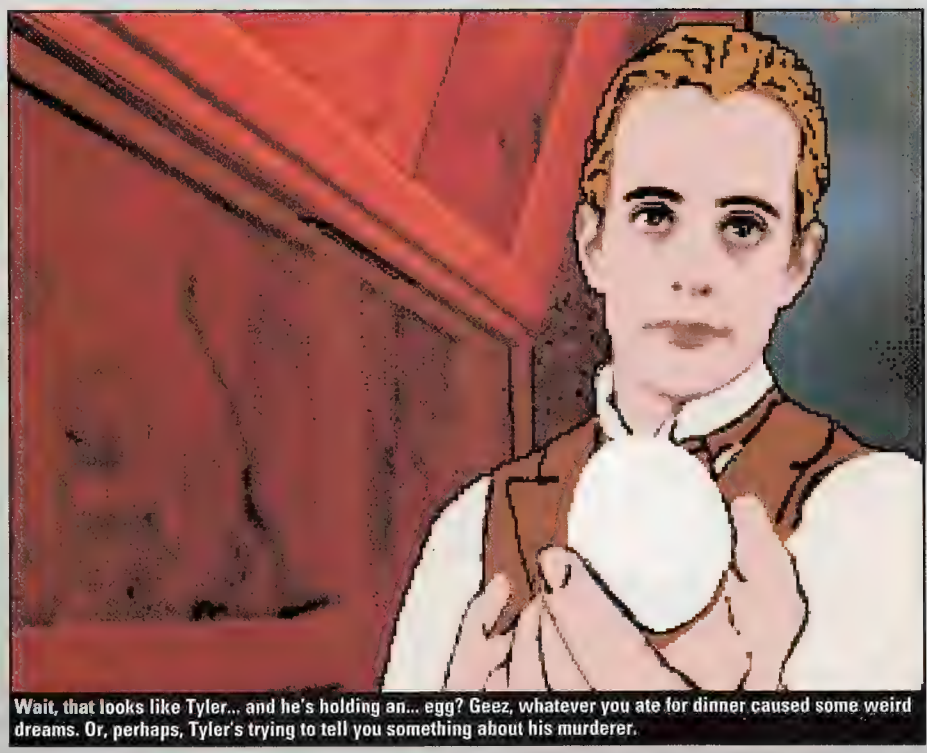
Wake up and go out into the corridor. The train appears empty and weird music is playing... When you've had your fill of exploring, return to your compartment. Who's that on the bed?... That's right, it was all a dream! It's 3:38 a.m., and the train is stopped in Strasbourg station.

Follow the Music

Just for fun, you can walk to the rear end of the train and listen to Kronos playing the piano. Alternatively, walk up the train and listen to the violin music coming from Compartment F (What's that melody she's practicing?). Knock at door F to meet Anna... and Max. When the screaming starts, follow Anna up the train to Compartment A. Count Vassili is having a schizophrenic attack of some kind. You didn't know you were a doctor, did you? Once the seizure is over, listen outside Compartment B to Anna's conversation with Tatiana (Anna gives you a dirty look when she comes out). Nothing more to do here. Return to Compartment 1 and go to sleep... this time for real.

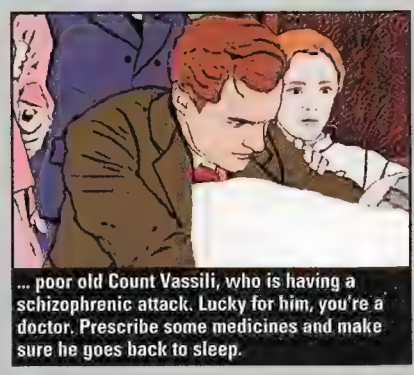
The Trainmaster is none to happy when he catches you sneaking around the Baggage Car. He will offer to escort you back to the Restaurant Car, but don't worry — you'll have other opportunities to explore this part of the train.

Congratulations, you finished the first CD! Next month, we'll cover the second CD of *The Last Express* — Saturday 25 July 1914, Ulm to Vienna. Be sure to pick up next month's issue!



Wait, that looks like Tyler... and he's holding an... egg? Geez, whatever you ate for dinner caused some weird dreams. Or, perhaps, Tyler's trying to tell you something about his murderer.

And you thought you were going to have a nice quiet train ride! Seems Anna knows some dangerous secrets about you. Don't worry, she'll soon be distracted by...



... poor old Count Vassili, who is having a schizophrenic attack. Lucky for him, you're a doctor. Prescribe some medicines and make sure he goes back to sleep.

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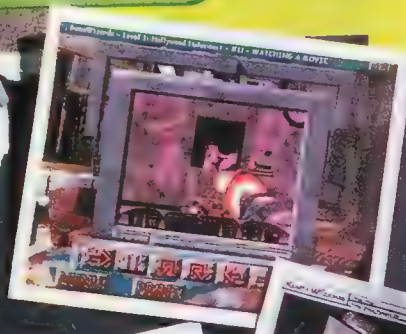

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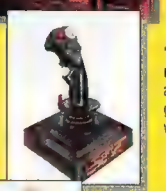

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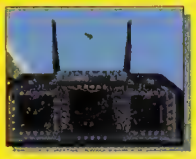

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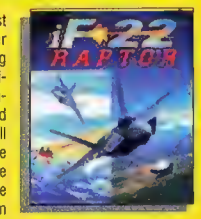

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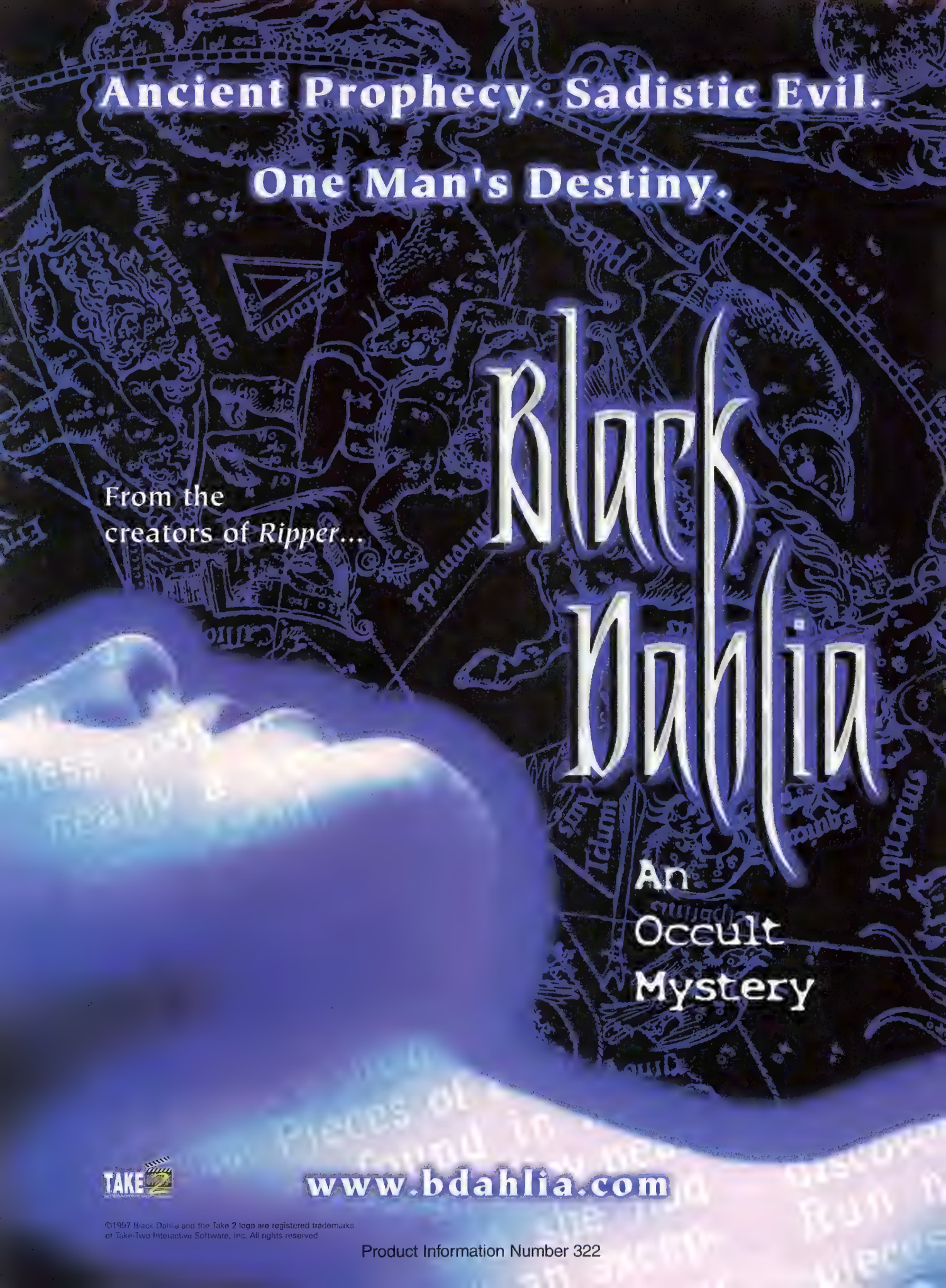

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Product Information Number 322

Magic: The Gathering

Our beginner's guide to deck-building will put you on the right track!

If you're an old hand at the card game, you'll have little problem jumping straight into the Shandalar section of the game, which is by far the most interesting and challenging aspect. If the CD-ROM is your first contact with the game, though, things are a little tougher.

This guide is intended to introduce new Magic players to the most important strategic element of the game — building a deck of spells to use in your quest to save Shandalar from the five arch-mages that threaten its survival. One of the greatest strengths of *Magic*, both in the card game and the PC version, is the game's infinite flexibility. What follows, then, is not a set of hard and fast rules, but rather a general discussion of basic deck design. It's possible to build very strong decks that completely ignore the advice given here, but to do so requires a lot of experience with the game. These guidelines will help you to create some playable, flexible decks to get you started — but never be scared of experimenting with ideas of your own.

First Things First

If you're new to Magic, the first thing you're going to have to do is learn how the game works, and how to play it. Luckily, those nice folks at MicroProse have come up with a well-written manual that should teach you the basics. Before starting the Shandalar game, take some time to read through the manual and play some games in the Duel section, trying different decks for both you and your opponent. Only once you feel confident that you understand the basics of the game should you start thinking about trying to save Shandalar.

If you're having real problems learning how to play, there are a couple of other options. If you're lucky enough to know someone who plays the card game (ask around, you'll probably find someone), get them to teach you how to play it. Alternatively, pick up one of the Starter Sets of the game, and read through the rulebook. It won't tell you anything about the interface used by the PC game, but it will do a good job of teaching you how to play *Magic* itself.

Deck Design 101

Okay, so you understand the basics, and you're itching to start saving Shandalar from total destruction. Before you jump right in and start wandering the land, though, it's worth giving some thought to what kind of deck you want to use.

Unlike the Duel, in which you can simply choose from a wide range of predesigned decks, before beginning the Shandalar game you must choose a color of cards from the five available. Once the game starts, you'll find yourself with a selection of cards of that color (and, depending on the difficulty level, a few of other colors as well). From this fairly humble beginning, one of your main tasks is to gather enough cards to create a powerful, flexible deck (or decks) that will allow you to take on the strongest creatures of the land, and eventually the arch-mages themselves.

It's a good idea, then, to start the game with a clear idea of what kind of deck you want, and then devote your early efforts in the game to putting it together. To do this, of course, you need to understand some of the basics of deck-building.

Size Isn't Everything

The very first thing to consider is the size of your deck. Setting a limit right from the start is a good idea because it makes you think more carefully about your choice of cards, and prevents you ending up with a huge deck. Having a load of cards might seem like a good idea, but it's actually one of the biggest mistakes you can make.

Knowing which cards to outfit your deck with could mean the difference between a narrowly won game and a decisive victory.

One of the keys to a good Magic deck is consistency — the more easily you can predict what cards you'll end up with in your hand, the better you can plan ahead, and the more likely it is that you'll get the card you want when you need it. The larger the deck, the more random it becomes, and the lower the chance of you getting a specific card in each duel.

The minimum number of cards

Arch Angel
Aladdin's Ring
0, ⟳: Aladdin's Ring deals 4 damage to target creature or player.
After these words the magician drew a ring off his finger, and put it on one of Aladdin's, saying: "It is a talisman against all evil, so long as you obey me."
— The Arabian Nights, Junior Classics trans.
Illus. Dan Frazier
Stats (60 cards)
Info
Exit
Abomination
Air Elemental
Aladdin's Ring

Get to know the Deck Builder well. Here is where you'll choose what cards you'll take into a battle. The filters help you organize the cards on the bottom that you're going to put in your hand.

Close games like this don't have to always be close. There's an element of chance that determines what cards you draw, but knowing each card's strengths and weaknesses will win you the duel.

you're allowed in Shandalar varies with the difficulty level, and can be as low as 30. However, too few cards can be almost as dangerous as too many — not only does it limit your deck's flexibility, it also increases the chance of you running out of cards (and thus losing the duel).

So what's the answer? Well, 60 cards is a good size — large enough to allow you some variety (and be unlikely to run out), but small enough to ensure consistency.

Look at the Colors

The next basic decision to make about your killer deck is which colors to use, and how many. Single color decks have the advantage of being the simplest to play, and you'll never be stuck with the wrong type of Land for the cards in your hand. However, single color decks are ultimately one-sided and inflexible. Each of the five colors of magic has its own strengths, but it also has its own weaknesses — and in single-color decks those weaknesses are exaggerated. Single-color decks are also vulnerable to spells and effects which target that specific color.

Multi-color decks, however, have problems all of their own, the main one being that it's hard to ensure you'll have the right Lands for the cards in your hand. For a basic deck, then, the best idea is normally two colors.

Which colors to choose is largely a matter of taste and style, but you should consider how the different colors work together. The two basic options are to choose colors that compensate for each others' weaknesses, or colors that complement each others' strengths. Green, for example, has a lot of powerful creature cards, and some good creature-enhancing features, as does Black. Red, on the other hand, has the most direct-damage spells like Lightning Bolt or Fireball. So, Green and Black would complement each other, producing a deck with masses of powerful creatures, while Green and Red would compensate for each color's weaknesses — Green providing good creatures and enchantments, while Red handles direct damage. All the color combinations have something to recommend them, but it's worth considering how to take advantage of the strengths they provide.

Lands to Conquer

With the colors chosen, the next step is to decide how many Lands to use. Lands provide the magical energy required to cast your spells, and so it's important to have enough. On the other hand, too many Lands will leave you with loads of Mana and no spells to cast.

Once again, there are no hard and fast rules here, but a good starting figure is to have a third of your deck as Lands — 20 cards in a 60-card deck. Again, for simplicity's sake, it's best to split these equally between the colors of your deck — 10 of each in a two-color design.

The rest of your deck, then, should be made up of spells. Once again, there are limitless options here, and a lot will depend on what cards you come across on your travels in Shandalar. However, there are some basics to bear in mind.

In most decks, it's a good idea to split the cards (and Lands) evenly between your chosen colors. Once again, uneven splits can work, but they're more difficult to deal with, and you should probably wait until you've got more experience with the game. Likewise, in most basic decks it's a good idea to have a fairly even split between creatures and other spells (Interrupts, Instants, Sorceries, and Enchantments). Creatures are by far the simplest way to damage your opponent (and to protect yourself from your opponent's creatures in turn), and as they stick around until killed they offer good "value for mana."

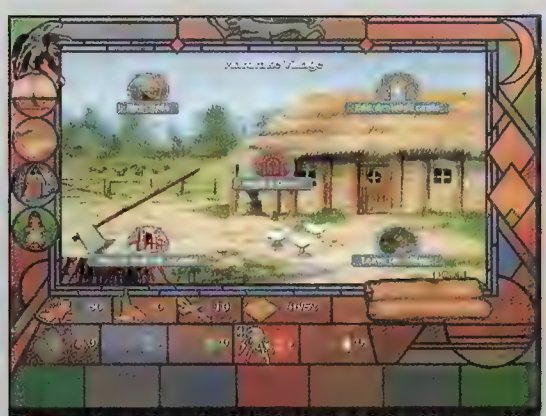
Try to have a range of creatures, including both weak and strong types — a Shivan Dragon is no use until you have enough Land to cast it, and in the meantime your opponent's pesky 1/1 creatures will be picking off your life points. Likewise, try to have some with Flying and First Strike — useful powers for attack and defense.

Which other spells you use will largely be determined by what you can find and what colors you use. Never forget, though, that the aim of the deck is to reduce your opponent's life to zero as quickly as possible. There are so many neat cards in Magic that its easy to get caught up in cool ideas that simply aren't very practical.

Finally, give some thought to artifacts. Unless you're building an artifact deck, you shouldn't use too many of these, but a few can be very useful, serving either to make the most of your deck's strengths, or to compensate for weaknesses.

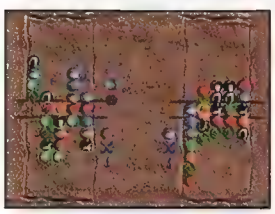
Putting it all Together

If you start the Shandalar game with a good idea of what kind of deck you want, you're far more likely to succeed. Dedicate yourself to getting as many cards of the colors you want as quickly as possible — if you want Green cards, hang around forests and fight Green monsters, and don't go exploring Islands where you'll end up winning Blue cards. As your deck grows and evolves, experiment with different combinations of cards, and if you have a particular idea you want to try out, remember that you can always use the Deck Builder to create it, then play a few games of Duel to see how it works, before risking everything in Shandalar. Most of all, though, never be afraid to experiment with new ideas and combinations of cards — the more you do, the better your deck will become and the more you'll appreciate the subtleties of the game.



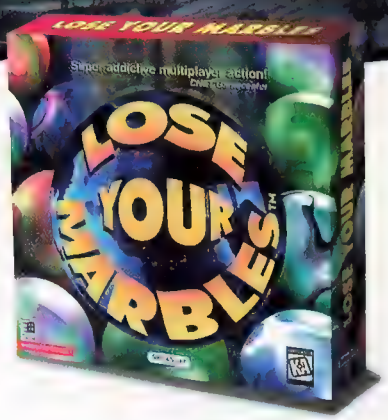
The quest to overthrow the Guild Lords starts in humble towns like this, but as you build your deck to greater strengths, you can take on bigger foes, until you rule the land of Shandalar.

YET ANOTHER EVIL PLOT TO UNDERMINE THE PRODUCTIVITY OF THE AMERICAN WORKER.



Work fast to match up marbles and make them disappear.

To win you have to Lose Your Marbles.



Lose Your Marbles. Bringing America to a grinding halt this September.

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System requirements: Windows 95 IBM PC or compatible with P60 MHZ processor, CD-ROM, 1 MB SVGA, 8 MB RAM, Direct X 3.0. Lockable door. Disconnectable phone. Authority to cancel prior commitments.

SEGASOFT

KIDS TO ADULTS
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

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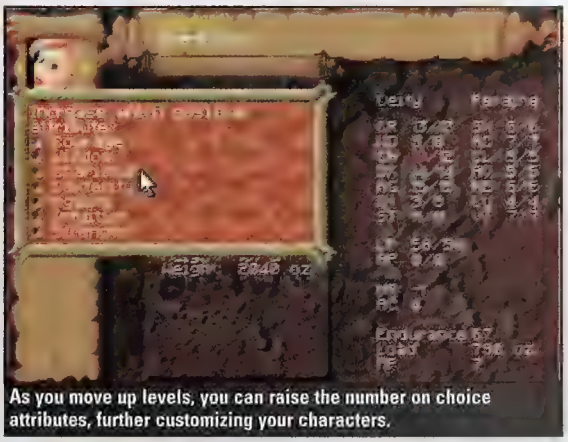
Product Information Number 304

Shadows Over Riva

Tips on how to be the life of the party.

Having a tough time deciding who to take with you while you adventure through the urban sprawl of Riva? Let us show you the way!



As you move up levels, you can raise the number on choice attributes, further customizing your characters.

As any true roleplaying fan knows, the secret to succeeding in an adventure is not just left up to the player's wits and powers of deduction, but the strength of the team on the journey. Like most party-oriented roleplaying games, *Shadows Over Riva* demands that you bring with you characters that will not only pull their own weight, but will do so over and over again.

Because of *Riva*'s completely open structure when it comes to building new characters, you can create a party of just about any motley group you could imagine. Largely, the way you organize your team is left to personal taste — do you prefer to use the strength of warriors to back you up during the harsh battles you'll face, or would you rather use the stealth of the thief to get around the danger? Or perhaps you prefer the wit of the magician to plot your way through? In any case, you can do it in *Riva*. But some paths can become more difficult with lopsided parties, which is why we offer the following suggestions for creating the party that will lead you through the final chapter of Sir-tech's Realms of Arkania series.

When in Doubt, Create New Beings

The game provides you with a rather well-rounded party at the beginning: a Dwarf, a female warrior, a she-rogue, a magicienne, a silvan elf, and a druid. Now, for the starting player, this group of adventurers works fine. If you'd rather not invest your time and energy in creating a new party, go right ahead and use them — they'll see you through to the end. However, if you really want to *know* your characters, you'll need to create them from scratch. You stand a much better chance of creating more powerful beings, which will make the long road ahead a bit easier to travel.

The diversity of the group is a good basis to start from, however. When you create your first couple of characters, we suggest you make them both warriors. Fighters are easiest to create, and their genesis will let you ease into the character creation system. You might even want to make one of them a dwarf, simply for variety's sake, or a Thorwalian, for the pure brute force they contain. In any case, having at least two strong hand-to-hand fighters in your party will help a great deal, especially when surrounded by a dozen orcs.

The next character you'll want to create is a rogue. You'll explore a lot of dungeons, and pick a lot of locks. And let's face it, no one picks a lock better than a thief. Besides which, they can be lethal with throwing weapons when it comes to battle. Just make sure the little bugger has lots of strength — one thing you'll find while playing this game is that you'll want to carry a lot of items around, especially when it comes time to sell them at the market for a tidy profit. If you have a chance, nudge the strength up a bit so the character can carry a larger load.

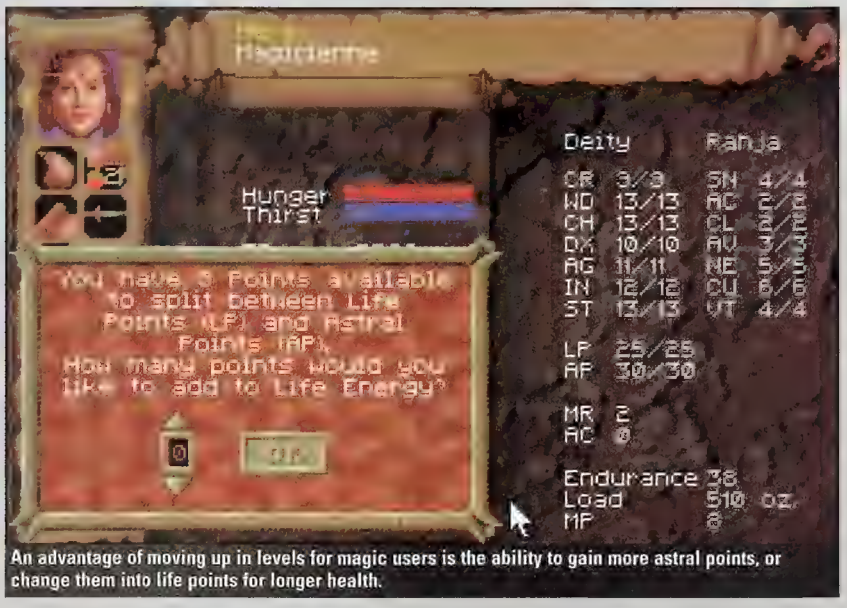
Every party should have a proficient magician along for those times when brute force will get you nowhere.

Once you've got your team gathered, it'll be time to explore the adventure *Riva* has in store!

Creating a magician is the most complex, time-consuming project, so you might want to save it until last. Or you can even make it the first character you make, depending on how much attention you think it needs. Each magician will need to chose an arcane lore, which will determine the emphasis of magic the character is most proficient at. This is a matter of preference, although the area of combat might help most when faced with the hordes of evil.

The last two characters can be anything you think will round out the company. For the most part, we would recommend a hunter, simply for the forestry skills and ranged weapon ability, and perhaps an Elf for the extra magical ability with undiminished fighting skills. Druids and witches don't seem to do a whole lot of good in the party. But once again, as long as you've got the variety of magic, steel, and clever thievery, the party should be well-rounded.

Keep in mind, these suggestions are only that — suggestions. The marvelous nature of roleplaying games lies in the fact that it's *your* game, and the path you follow, which may not be so unique, is followed by character that are yours, and yours alone. You'll certainly enjoy the game if you play with the default characters, but there's something deeply satisfying about completing a successful quest with a group of characters that you've nurtured, cherished, and groomed from the very beginning.



An advantage of moving up in levels for magic users is the ability to gain more astral points, or change them into life points for longer health.

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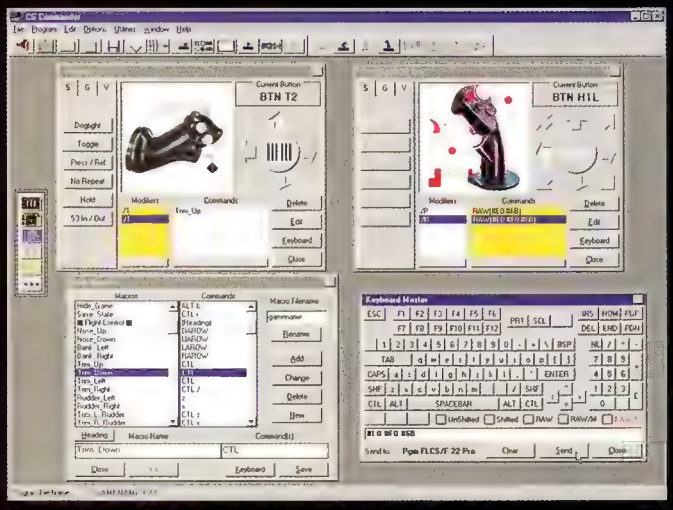

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Readers' Requests

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MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries

"The Monkey on your Back" is a fun little maneuver I came up with while honing my *DFA* skills (*Death From Above*), and it is now one of my favorite strategies against slow, heavy mechs. The goal of this tactic is to jump over the enemy mech, twist in the air, and land behind it with all your weapons charged and pointing up its tailpipe. Then you proceed to fry the internal components from the confines of its torso and blowing them out his chest.

This is how I do it. I close the distance at high speed at a forty-five degree angle to the target, to make it more difficult for the enemy mech to lead me. Have your jump jets ready for the next step. Once within a couple hundred meters of the mech, hit your vertical jump jets with just enough altitude to clear the top of the enemy mech. As you begin to pass over the mech, turn down your thrusters to low and turn 180 degrees with your turning jets, and apply a little forward jet once the turn is complete. Apply all those weapons to that soft back armor. As the mech turns, repeat the process.

—Thomas Barrows, *Veazie, ME*

It's good to know that our own Coconut Monkey, creator of the game Death From Above*, could inspire such brilliant strategies for other games. He'll be so pleased to learn he's contributed to his competition! If only CM didn't use that particular trick on us so often! Having a coconut monkey drop on your head randomly throughout the day produces one heck of a headache.*

Need for Speed 2

I just love racing around in the fantastic cars of *Need for Speed 2*! I've heard that there are some cheats that allow you to race other vehicles, though. Do you know what they are?

— Mark Percy, *New York, NY*

You're in luck — it just so happens that we have those cheats! Just take a gander at the Cheater's Corner on this very page. Use them well, and try not to smash up that army truck — the U.S. Government frowns on that kind of thing.

With a bit of practice, you can leap-frog over enemy mechs and blast-em from behind. Who said Coconut Monkey never had any great ideas?

Cheater's Corner

NEED FOR SPEED 2

Use these codes to race in a variety of vehicles. You can type these codes at any menu screen, but we recommend the MAIN SCREEN before you start to race.

armytruck
Army Truck

bmw
BMW

bus
Yellow School Bus

jeepyj
Jeep YJ

landcruiser
Toyota Landcruiser

mercedes
Mercedes

miata
Mazda Miata

quattro
Audi Quattro

semi
Semi Truck with a Trailer

vanagon
VW Combi

volvo
Volvo Stationwagon

vwbug
VW Beetle

Betrayal at Krondor

I have some tips for anyone playing *Betrayal at Krondor*. I don't know how well these tips will carry over to *Betrayal in Antara*, but they work great for *Krondor*.

READER'S TIP WINNER OF THE MONTH

These items you will want in someone's inventory at all times:

Whetstone: Always repair swords after a battle.

Armorer's Hammer: Always repair armor after a battle.

Aventurine: Always repair crossbows after a battle.

Shovel: You never know when you'll need to dig something up.

Rope: There are lots of holes in caves that have no other way of getting past.

Lock Picks: If you don't have the right key, these are invaluable.

Herbal Pack and Restoratives: If a party member goes down, you should use one herbal pack and ten to 15 restoratives on them and then Rest Until Healed — they should be feeling better in no time.

Powder Bag: Give to Owen. If he gets to the point where he can't get away from an attacker, chuck this in their face to buy some time.

Cheater's Corner

BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR

In the overhead map, hold down the Alt key, the right Shift key, and the TILDE KEY (~) for a few seconds, and a Moredhel chest will appear. It contains all the items you need to finish the chapter, and you can heal all of your characters if you like. However, in order to open the chest, you'll need to give it the correct code for that chapter. Here they are:

Chapter 1:	6478
Chapter 2:	9216
Chapter 3:	7702
Chapter 4:	2132
Chapter 5:	5052
Chapter 6:	0680
Chapter 7:	8184
Chapter 8:	4743
Chapter 9:	3995

Enter the correct codes in this Moredhel chest, and you'll receive all you need to finish the current chapter of the game.

Tuning Fork: If a battle isn't going your way, this is a life-saver.
Rations: This seems obvious, but make sure you're well stocked for a long journey. And always check rations you find on fallen enemies. They are often spoiled or poisoned.

Here are some ways to boost some skills quickly:
Haggling: When you're in a shop, try to haggle for everything until either the shopkeeper drops his price or won't allow you to buy at all. Exit the shop. Re-enter and repeat. Doing this often can save you some serious cash.
Armorcraft: Any armor you find, whether you keep it or not, use an armorer's hammer to repair it.
Weaponcraft: Any sword you find, whether you keep it or not, repair it.
Lockpick: When you come to a lock you can't open, keep trying to pick it, time after time. Lockpicks are easy to find, so don't worry about breaking some of them.

Always try to keep your items somehow enchanted. Blessings from temples are good, but expensive. Things like Naphtha and Silverthorn work great.

If you're caught in a trap, use the Rest Until Healed option until everyone is completely healed in stamina and health. Traps can be a pain, but if you have a near-dead character, they are blessings. Once everyone is healed, cast Skin of the Dragon on someone and have them walk through the trap.

When fighting, *never* let anyone escape. Very valuable and important items can be found on these guys. Use spells like Invitation or Despair Thine Eyes to stop them.

One final tip: Try to get to Sethanon. It's swarming with ghosts and can be very difficult, even if your characters have become very strong. But in Sethanon, you will find spells and treasures galore. If you can make it out, believe me, it's worth it.

I hope these tips can help out anyone having trouble with *Betrayal at Krondor*. They sure helped me!

— James Gabrielsen, *Ogden, UT*

Keeping important items in your inventory is a key strategy to *Betrayal at Krondor*.

Letting players have such a classic RPG for free was a great move on Sierra's part, and you hit the nail right on the head with those tips! Although we've printed them several times before, take a look at the Cheater's Corner box to see how you can further your quest more quickly. The cheat gives you a chest containing all you will need to finish the current chapter, as well as the ability to heal your characters.

Oh, and by the way, James, because you submitted such a complete and helpful tip, you're the winner of this month's Tip of the Month contest! Expect to see a package arrive on your doorstep soon, and be thankful it'll be easier to open than a Moredhel chest!

PCG

ARE YOU A GAMING GENIUS?

Do you know the secrets to every PC game ever made? Want to share your love of gaming with the world? Then Strategy Central wants you for The Tip of the Month Club.

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Cheater's Corner

SHADOW WARRIOR

At any time, hit T and type the codes to activate cheats.

swcheat
Toggle God mode on/off

swgimme
Items

swtrek##
Warp to e#, m#

swghost
Toggle no clipping mode on/off

swstart
Restart level

swsave
Save map

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ionos
58719 $29

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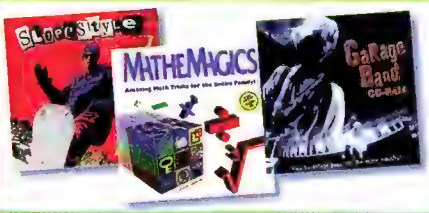

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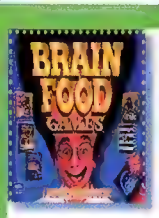

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LETTERS

We bet you already know that the month of August was named for Augustus Caesar, first emperor of Rome (he also made a wicked salad). But did you know the eighth month was almost called "Ruby," after the popular Kenny Rogers song? It's true! (And even if it's not, it's as good an excuse as any for you to write us with your own little-known facts about the Gambler or the Emperor.)

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The PC Gamer Family

Arriah Hopkins proves that nine out of ten babies enjoy the tangy taste of *PC Gamer*!

I thought the hardest thing about being a dad would be changing dirty diapers! Boy, was I wrong. It turns out that the hardest thing is actually learning to share my subscription to *PC Gamer*. I've been with you guys since your very first issue (of which I have every one on my shelf), and I can say that *PC Gamer* is by far the best around. In fact, it is the only magazine that I subscribe to or purchase. In the beginning, it was easy. Put the magazine on the shelf, and it would always be there when I needed it. But now, things are not that simple. Arriah seems to like them as much as I do. I guess I'll just have to learn to share. Any one have any better ideas?

— Robert Hopkins, *via the Internet*

Codie Comeback

I was one of the 1997 preliminary judges for the Codie awards (you can check me out on the SPA page, but note I am not otherwise associated with or speak for SPA), and I am amazed at the disinformation published in your May and June issues.

Let me make a few things perfectly clear:

1) Games are not the centerpiece of the Codies. Most of the judges who had "nothing to do with computer gaming" did not review computer games. I have had over 20 gaming reviews published and play computer games fanatically. I reviewed the Strategy, Sports, and Simulation categories and was myself disappointed with the nominations (neither *Red Alert* nor *Heroes of Might and Magic II* were nominated). But like all other preliminary judges, I had to choose the best five in each category (even if Sports only had six games to choose from!).

2) The only people who nominate games are the game companies themselves! SPA does try to encourage some of the more notable standouts, but ultimately it is up to each company. It is unbelievable that you would publish Scott Miller of Apogee whining about *Duke Nukem* not being nominated when it was his responsibility! If he can't afford to join SPA and send in a nomination, then he shouldn't complain that he was "passed over" by the nonexistent "Codie nominators." Clearly, the Codie awards have not represented the gaming community very well over the last couple of years, but twisting the truth will not solve anything. The Codies do bring together some of the top names in the computer industry, and the gaming companies need to be active participants, especially if they're going to complain about the results. One notable problem is optimism on the part of the gaming companies.

Since the deadline is Thanksgiving, many companies nominate their holiday releases, and then when the games slip, the nomination pool shrinks dramatically. Perhaps SPA could help by pushing the deadline past Christmas (this would also encourage pessimistic companies to nominate their holiday releases). Let's try to keep the discourse on this type of productive level. I'm sure that many of your readers would appreciate an elevated discussion of the issues.

— Joe Willette, *via the Internet*

It was never our intention to "twist the truth," Joe, and while we appreciate the points you make, our opinion of the Codies remains unchanged.

Frankly, any awards that require a company to be a member of the sponsoring organization (paying thousands of dollars in annual dues) are automatically suspect in our book — even more so if some of today's best game developers choose not to be members. And, let's face it, any awards process that results in Monty Python & The Quest For the Holy Grail *ending up at the top of the strategy category — with* Red Alert *and* Heroes of Might and Magic II *completely absent — is a process in dire need of repair. We just want people to understand that the Codie Awards — at least as they relate to gaming, and as they're chosen today — shouldn't be taken seriously as an indication of a game's quality.*

Q&A: DVD, Multi-Play

I have a couple of questions for you all: First, you review hundreds of games a year. So far, most have been single-player games, and a few have multiplayer capability. I was wondering if you were planning on reviewing multiplayer only games in the near future. My second question is: In the first two annual *PC Gamer* Awards, there was a category called Best CD-ROM Enhanced. Now, since most games are released on CD-ROM, that category is gone. With the introduction of DVD-ROM, will you plan on having a Best DVD-ROM Enhanced category?

— Alan Bandurka, *via the Internet*

Good questions, Alan. We'll answer the easier one first: It's too soon to tell whether or not the advent of DVD-ROM will warrant creating a PC Gamer *award for DVD enhancement of an existing game. But we won't rule it out — once the inevitable wave of shovelware subsides, some game developers will undoubtedly start taking full advantage of the opportunities DVD-ROM provides for enhancing existing games.*

As for the multi-player issue, we've been keeping an eye on the online-only games showing up all over the Internet these days. We plan to include them in our reviews section Real Soon Now, but deciding just when an online-only

game is ready to be reviewed has been a bit of a problem. Most of these games don't appear on shelves in nice, shrink-wrapped boxes; instead, you download the software directly over the 'net, frequently starting with a beta version and installing various patches as the game develops and matures. That has made it tough to decide whether or not an online game is finished and reviewable. WarBirds, *for instance, has been around for a year or more, and iMagic Online (formerly ICI) is still releasing new updates to its software. We're not sure what the best solution is, but we're open to suggestions.*

Dissin' DirectX

What's the deal with DirectX? I hate it! Every time I install a new game or a new demo or something, this miserable Microsoft mess infects, infests, and immolates my system. Screens turn black and flicker, mouse drivers hang and crash, Windows collapses, and the computer dies. The infamous BSOD (Black Screen of Death) and the Blue Bug Page have become as familiar to me as my screen saver.

This is far, far worse than the Bad Old Days of DOS. At least then you could tweak your memory and startup files and maybe fix things. Now all you can do is reinstall DirectX again and again and again. Use your Godlike *PC Gamer* powers to make Microsoft wake up and smell the roast beef!

— Adam Wolfram, *Sacramento, CA*

So, Adam, you noticed that DirectX isn't exactly... um... stable. So has just about every other PC gamer in the world. It sometimes seems like every new Windows 95 game installs its own peculiar version of DirectX, and new versions aren't entirely compatible with older ones. The result has been all kinds of compatibility problems — the very problems that DirectX is supposed to solve. The silver lining in this cloud (well, maybe it's just a bronze lining) is that Microsoft seems to be aware of the problems that have brought DirectX such notoriety; they've apparently given DirectX version 4 a miss and have gone on to develop DirectX 5, which promises to have more features and be more stable. Games based on DirectX 5 should begin showing up before the end of the year.

Virgin's *Sabre Ace: Conflict Over Korea* is one of the first games developed with DirectX 5, which includes improved support for 3D accelerators.

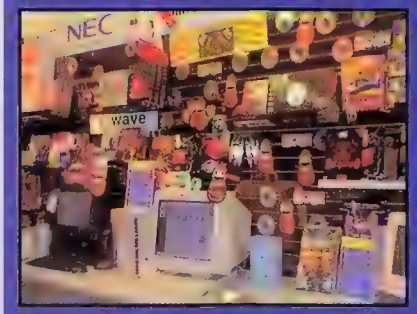
MONKEYLOVE

On a whim — one of those whims you get when deadlines are fast approaching, exhaustion is setting in, and space needs to be filled — we put a Coconut Monkey Desktop Companion cutout on the back of the CD-ROM card that went into the May and June 1997 issues of *PC Gamer*.

We had no idea what a positive response it would bring. What is it about our mascot that inspires such adoration? Is it the series of games he creates exclusively for our CD? (Well, no — we doubt that.) Or is it just his pointy little head?

We're overworked/underpaid computer retail people from the Great White North (Newmarket, Canada) who decided to decorate a little tonight. We happened to have some leftover demo CDs and some old issues of your magazine laying around... Hope you like the result.
Your Loyal Coconut Monkey followers.

— Shawn Condé, Mads Pilested, Kasper Pilested,
Compucentre 103, Newmarket Ontario, Canada



I would just like to thank you very much for sending me my very own Coconut Monkey cardboard cutout! He sits above my computer desk, happily gazing down upon me as I play my *PC Gamer* demos, offering quick and handy advice, and consoling me when I lose. "So what if you are the first rebel pilot to have actually caused more damage to a rebel convoy than the Imperial pilots that were attacking it?" he will often say to me. "So what if you have the largest collection of lead medals and plaques in the history of the Imperial Navy?" "So what if you were personally responsible for the destruction of the Death Star, and you were an Imperial pilot?" "At least," he says compassionately, "*you* have hands!" How can you argue with that?

— Cam Burns, *via the Internet*

Griping in Three Dimensions

One thing that's got me cheesed off is the lack of titles supporting 3D acceleration. I've got my wicked 3Dfx Voodoo Diamond Monster 3D card here, and it kicks ass on such games as *Tomb Raider, Quake, MechWarrior 2*, etc., but more games should support it! I mean, it's just one tiny .EXE file that replaces the regular executable, and then you get awesome frame rates, *really* good graphics, and the game kicks even more ass. Why can't companies lock a couple of their programmers into a room for a couple of days while they make a patch? Dunno. Go figure this industry.

— Rene Valen,
Vancouver, Canada

Orcroversy

I just read your feature story about *WarCraft Adventures* and was aghast. Blizzard will have J.R.R. Tolkien spinning in his grave with this one.

The very idea that there is "another side" of the Orcs, which is "very honorable," circumvents the intent of his whole portrayal. Did *WarCraft II* do so well that they think they have full artistic license with the use of Orcs? Such arrogance! If you need to use someone else's work to sell your product, at least stay true to form. (It's bad enough they made them bright green.)

I like Blizzard's work, but I must say I hope they fall on their faces with this one. Not only are they going to offend loyal Tolkien fans, but from what I can tell, they also run the risk of offending American Indians, whose storyline and garb they seem to have borrow heavily from. After all, who wants to be likened to an Orc?

— Mark S. Hajos, *via the Internet*

Well, Mark, the word "orc" dates back at least as far as the 16th century, so it's not very likely that Tolkien invented those critters. And who's to say old J.R.R.'s vision resembles real *orcs more than Blizzard's?* PCG

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		E			
P	I	N	C	H	W
	R				
S					

MYSTERY WORD

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

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BREAK .....Z	PUNCH .....S	SPRAY C	TURBO.....V
STOMP .....T	STAND.....R	PRESS.....E	DREAM ....O
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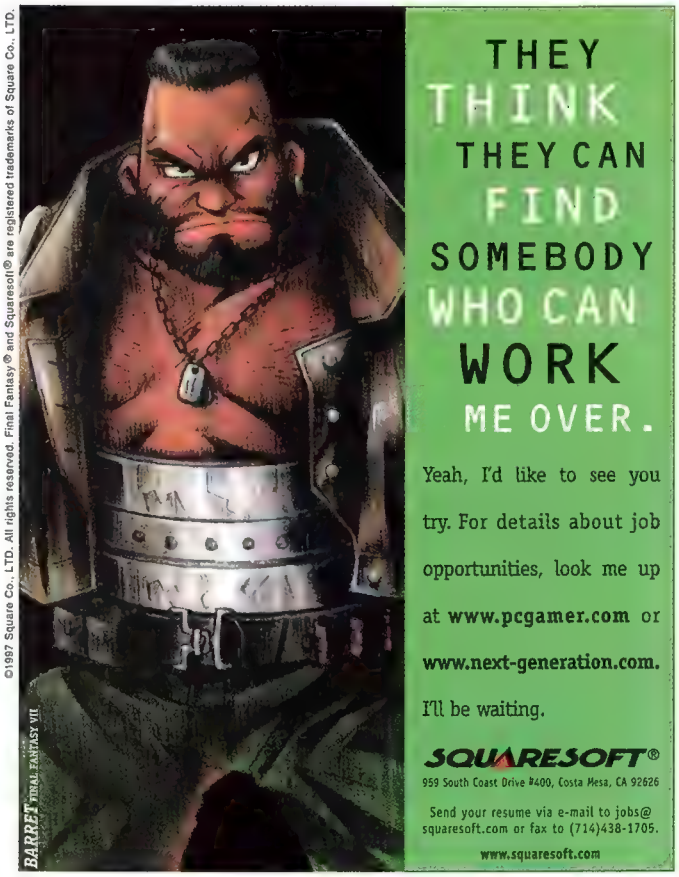
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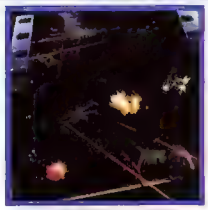

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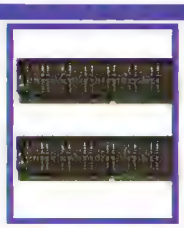

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THE ULTIMATE

PREVIEW

OF THE YEAR'S

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IT'S BACK!

Yes, it's our definitive post-E3 round-up of the sizzling new games headed your way over the next 12 months. Some you'll already have heard about, some will take you by surprise, and some will totally blow you away. We'll have no less than 50 red-hot previews to tickle your tastebuds, all in easily digestible chunks. Can you afford to miss it? We think not.

Westwood Ho!

We'll also be reporting from deep inside the Las Vegas HQ of Westwood Studios to bring you the low-down on the company's mind-blowing new wave of games for the year ahead. We'll have exclusive first-look stuff on the amazing *Blade Runner*, as well as sneak peeks at the next generation of *Command & Conquer* and beyond. Can you afford to miss this either? Of course you can't.

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All the latest gaming stuff reviewed in The Hard Stuff, more strategy than ever, and more Scoops than you can shake a stick at.

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Jake was stunned. And who wouldn't be in his shoes? Here he was sitting across from the most beautiful woman he had ever met, and, yet, he was hired to kill her. It didn't make any sense (like it ever does in these crazy B-movie plotlines). And to top it off, she knew he was a hitman.

"Are you OK? You look a little faint," Susan said. "Did I say something wrong? Would you like some water? Say something..."

"Ummm... I'm fine. I will take that water though," Jake said before taking the glass and slamming what was left of her water. He wiped his mouth and slowly set the glass down.

"Do you know why Marcus hired me?" Jake asked. He wasn't sure what he expected to hear, but it definitely wasn't what came next...

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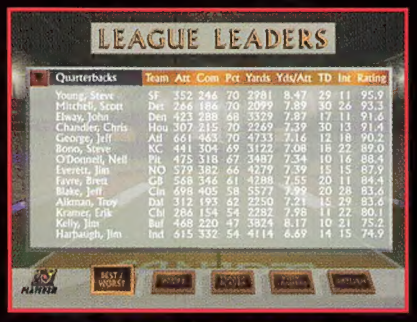

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1932

- 20-man rosters require most of your players to play both offense and defense. Get ready to use Dan Marino as a defensive back or Junior Seau at running back!
- The football is larger and harder to throw. Do you take a chance on the pass or grind it out with a running attack?

1968

- Play a little rougher on the receivers. You can hit them anywhere on the field until the ball is thrown...and it's all legal!
- Players like Dick Butkus ruled the gridiron, paving the way for the modern-day player.

1950

- Rules favor the running game.
- Goal posts were placed in the front of the end zone. The "Post" pattern was commonly used to run defenders into the posts for an easy touchdown reception.

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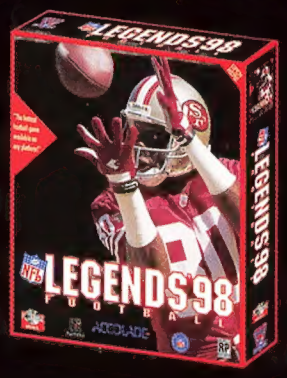

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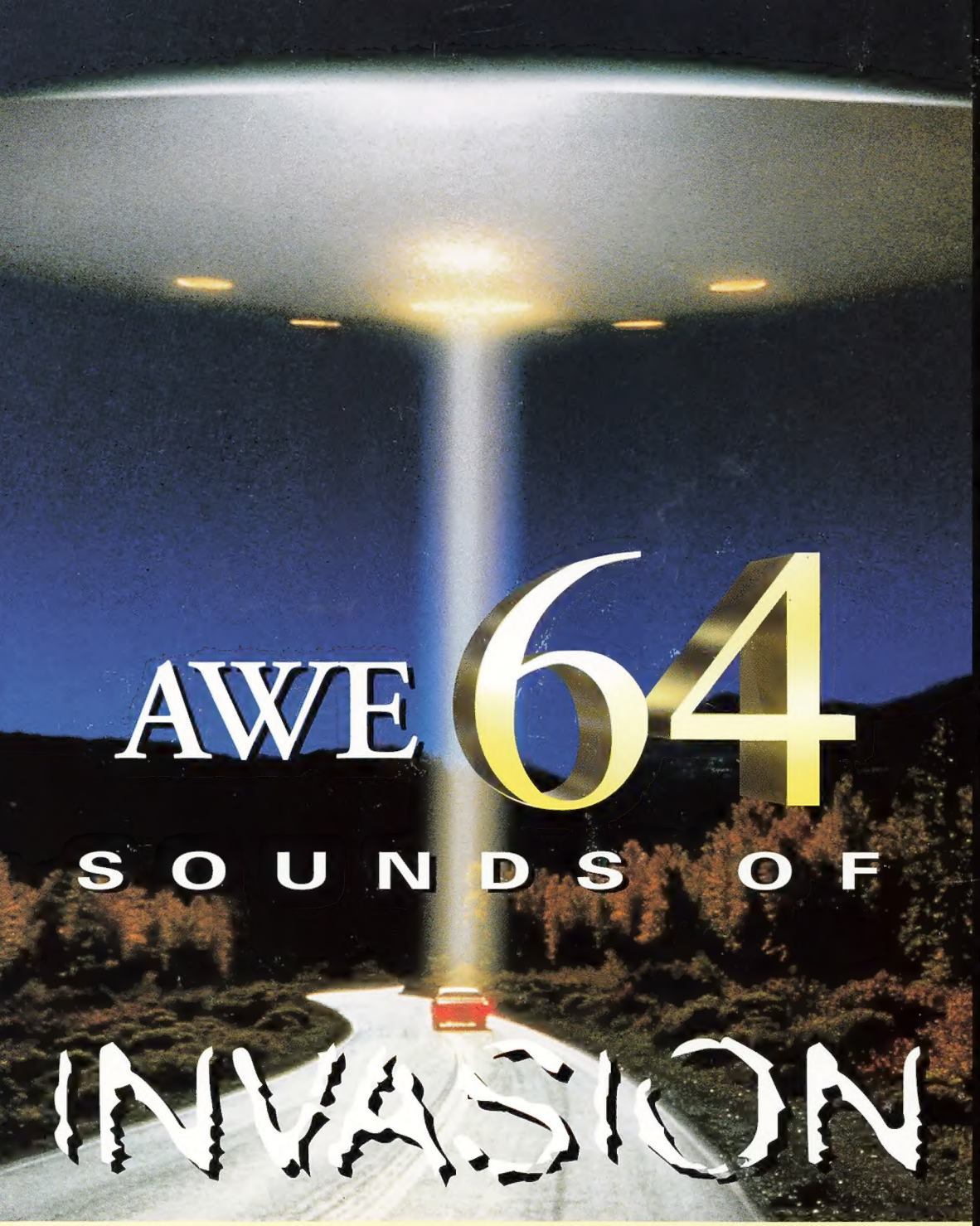

1. "We Come In Peace."
2. Blasting Ray Guns.
3. People Screaming.
4. "You Must Believe Me!"
5. Exploding Buildings.
6. Whirring Space Ships.
7. Brains Being Sucked.
8. Bones Crunching.
9. Aliens Phoning Home.
10. Metallic Scraping.
11. Cars Crashing.
12. Kidneys Bursting.
13. Insertion of Probes.
14. Heads Exploding.
15. "Run for Cover!"
16. "Warning."
17. Aliens Melting.
18. Pods Hatching.
19. Destroying the Monster.
20. Buildings Imploding.
21. Spaceships Docking.
22. Boiling Flesh.
23. "Mayday, Mayday!"
24. Exploding Spaceship.
25. People Running.
26. "I saw a UFO!"
27. Planes Taking Off.
28. "We're at DefCon 4."
29. Aliens Communicating.
30. Children Crying.
31. Slurp.
32. Clinking of Autopsy Instruments.
33. Laser Swords Crashing.
34. "Hyperspace!"
35. Flesh Being Torn Off Bones.
36. "They're Coming."
37. Wailing Sirens.
38. "You Must Die."
39. "Beam Me Up."
40. Zap!!!
41. Air Locks Closing.
42. "Oh, My God!"
43. Lasers Charging Up.
44. "We Need More Power!"
45. Ray Guns Blasting.
46. Calling the Mothership.
47. Horns Blaring.
48. "We Won!"
49. "Lock on Target!"
50. Crystals Charging.
51. Area 51 Guard: "No Admittance."
52. Zap-Zap!
53. Warning Alarms.
54. Air Locks Opening.
55. "Set to Stun!"
56. "Red Alert!"
57. Shields Up.
58. Warp Speed.
59. "Blast 'em!"
60. Eyeballs Squishing.
61. Spaceships Cloaking.
62. Radar Ping.
63. "Fire at Will!"
64. "Take Me to Your Leader."

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